











THE SECRETS OF THE SELF  
(ASRÁR-I KHUDÍ)



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THE,  
SECRETS OF THE SELF  
(ASRÁR-I KHUDÍ)

A PHILOSOPHICAL POEM

BY

SHEIKH MUHAMMAD IQBAL  
OF LAHORE

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL PERSIAN  
WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY

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## INTRODUCTION

THE *Asrār-i Khudí* was first published at Lahore in 1915. I read it soon afterwards and thought so highly of it that I wrote to Iqbal, whom I had the pleasure of meeting at Cambridge some fifteen years ago, asking leave to prepare an English translation. My proposal was cordially accepted, but in the meantime I found other work to do, which caused the translation to be laid aside until last year. Before submitting it to the reader, a few remarks are necessary concerning the poem and its author.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The present translation follows the text of the second edition.

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• Iqbal is an Indian Moslem. During his stay in the West he studied modern philosophy, in which subject he holds degrees from the Universities of Cambridge and Munich. His dissertation on the development of metaphysics in Persia — an illuminating sketch — appeared as a book in 1908. Since then he has developed a philosophy of his own, on which I am able to give some extremely interesting notes communicated by himself. Of this, however, the *Asrār-i Khudī* gives no systematic account, though it puts his ideas in a popular and attractive form. While the Hindu philosophers, in explaining the doctrine of the unity of being, addressed themselves to the head, Iqbal, like the Persian poets who teach the same doctrine, takes a more dangerous course and aims at the heart. He is no mean poet, and his verse can rouse or persuade even if his logic fail to

convince. His message is not for the Mohammedans of India alone, but for Moslems everywhere: accordingly he writes in Persian instead of Hindustani—a happy choice, for amongst educated Moslems there are many familiar with Persian literature, while the Persian language is singularly well adapted to express philosophical ideas in a style at once elevated and charming.

Iqbal comes forward as an apostle, if not to his own age, then to posterity—

“I have no need of the car of To-day,  
I am the voice of the poet of To-morrow”—

and after Persian fashion he invokes the Saki to fill his cup with wine and pour moonbeams into the dark night of his thought,

“That I may lead home the wanderer,  
And imbue the idle looker-on with restless  
impatience,  
And advance hotly on a new quest,  
And become known as the champion of a new  
spirit.”

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• Let us begin at the end. What is the far-off goal on which his eyes are fixed? The answer to that question will discover his true character, and we shall be less likely to stumble on the way if we see whither we are going. Iqbal has drunk deep of European literature, his philosophy owes much to Nietzsche and Bergson, and his poetry often reminds us of Shelley; yet he thinks and feels as a Moslem, and just for this reason his influence may be great. He is a religious enthusiast, inspired by the vision of a New Mecca, a world-wide, theocratic, Utopian state in which all Moslems, no longer divided by the barriers of race and country, shall be one. He will have nothing to do with nationalism and imperialism. These, he says, "rob us of Paradise": they make us strangers to each other, destroy feelings of brotherhood, and sow the bitter seed of war. He dreams

of a world ruled by religion, not by politics, and condemns Machiavelli, that “worshipper of false gods,” who has blinded so many. It must be observed that when he speaks of religion he always means Islam. Non-Moslems are simply unbelievers, and (in theory, at any rate) the *Jihád* is justifiable, provided that it is waged “for God’s sake alone.” A free and independent Moslem fraternity, having the Ka’ba as its centre and knit together by love of Allah and devotion to the Prophet—such is Iqbal’s ideal. In the *Asrár-i Khudí* and the *Rumúz-i Békhudí* he preaches it with a burning sincerity which we cannot but admire, and at the same time points out how it may be attained. The former poem deals with the life of the individual Moslem, the latter with the life of the Islamic community. •

The cry “Back to the Koran ! Back



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to Mohammed!"<sup>6</sup> has been heard before, and the responses have hitherto<sup>7</sup> been somewhat discouraging. But on this occasion it is allied with the revolutionary force of Western philosophy, which Iqbal hopes and believes will vitalise the movement and ensure its triumph. He sees that Hindu intellectualism and Islamic pantheism have destroyed the capacity for action, based on scientific observation and interpretation of phenomena, which distinguishes the Western peoples "and especially the English." Now, this capacity depends ultimately on the conviction that *khudī* (selfhood, individuality, personality) is real and is not merely an illusion of the mind. Iqbal, therefore, throws himself with all his might against idealistic philosophers and pseudo-mystical poets, the authors, in his opinion, of the decay prevailing in Islam, and argues that

only by self-affirmation, self-expression, and self-development can the Moslems once more become strong and free. He appeals from the alluring raptures of Hafiz to the moral fervour of Jalál-u'ddín Rûmí, from an Islam sunk in Platonic contemplation to the fresh and vigorous monotheism which inspired Mohammed and brought Islam into existence.<sup>1</sup> Here, perhaps, I should guard against a possible misunderstanding. Iqbal's philosophy is religious, but he does not treat philosophy as the handmaid of religion. Holding that the full development of the individual presupposes a society, he finds the ideal society in what he considers to be the Prophet's conception of Islam. Every Moslem, in striving to make himself a

<sup>1</sup> His criticism of Hafiz called forth angry protests from Súfí circles in which Hafiz is venerated as a master-hierophant. Iqbal made no recantation, but since the passage had served its purpose and was offensive to many, he cancelled it in the second edition of the poem. It is omitted in my translation.

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more perfect individual, is helping to establish the Islamic kingdom of God upon earth.<sup>1</sup>

The *Asrār-i Khudī* is composed in the metre and modelled on the style of the famous *Masnavī*. In the prologue Iqbal relates how Jalálu'ddín Rúmí, who is to him almost what Virgil was to Dante, appeared in a vision and bade him arise and sing. Much as he dislikes the type of Súfism exhibited by Hafiz, he pays homage to the pure and profound genius of Jalálu'ddín, though he rejects the doctrine of self-abandonment taught by the great Persian

<sup>1</sup> The principles of Islam, regarded as the ideal society, are set forth in the author's second poem, the *Rumúz-i Békhudī* or "Mysteries of Selflessness." He explains the title by pointing out that the individual who loses himself in the community reflects both the past and the future as in a mirror, so that he transcends mortality and enters into the life of Islam, which is infinite and everlasting. Among the topics discussed are the origin of society, the divine guidance of man through the prophets, the formation of collective life-centres, and the value of History as a factor in maintaining the sense of personal identity in a people.

mystic and does not accompany him in his pantheistic flights.

To European readers the *Asrār-i Khudī* presents certain obscurities which no translation can entirely remove. These lie partly in the form and would not be felt, as a rule, by any one conversant with Persian poetry. Often, however, the ideas themselves, being associated with peculiarly Oriental ways of thinking, are hard for our minds to follow. I am not sure that I have always grasped the meaning or rendered it correctly; but I hope that such errors are few, thanks to the assistance so kindly given me by my friend Muhammad Shafi, now Professor of Arabic at Lahore, with whom I read the poem and discussed many points of difficulty. Other questions of a more fundamental character have been solved for me by the author himself. At my request he drew up a statement of his philosophical

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views on the problems touched and suggested in the book. I will give it in his own words as nearly as possible. It is not, of course, a complete statement, and was written, as he says, "in a great hurry," but apart from its power and originality it elucidates the poetical argument far better than any explanation that could have been offered by me.

### "1. THE PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS OF THE *ĀSRĀR-I KHUDĪ*

"'That experience should take place in finite centres and should wear the form of finite this-ness is in the end inexplicable.' These are the words of Prof. Bradley. But starting with these inexplicable centres of experience, he ends in a unity which he calls Absolute and in which the finite centres lose their finiteness and distinctness. According to him, therefore, the finite centre is only an appearance. The test

of reality, in his opinion,<sup>•</sup> is all-inclusiveness ; and since all finiteness is 'infected with relativity,' it follows that the latter is a mere illusion. To my mind, this inexplicable finite centre of experience is the fundamental fact of the universe. All life is individual ; there is no such thing as universal life. God himself is an individual : He is the most unique individual.<sup>1</sup> The universe, as Dr. McTaggart says, is an association of individuals ; but we must add that the orderliness and adjustment which we find in this association is not eternally achieved and complete in itself. It is the result of instinctive or conscious effort. We are gradually travelling from chaos to cosmos and are helpers in this achievement. Nor are the members of the association fixed ; new members are ever coming to birth to

•

<sup>1</sup> This view was held by the orthodox Imám Ahmad ibn Hanbal in its extreme (anthropomorphic) form.

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co-operate in the great task. Thus the universe is not a completed act: it is still in the course of formation. There can be no complete truth about the universe, for the universe has not yet become 'whole.' The process of creation is still going on, and man too takes his share in it, inasmuch as he helps to bring order into at least a portion of the chaos. The Koran indicates the possibility of other creators than God.<sup>1</sup>

"Obviously, this view of man and the universe is opposed to that of the English Neo-Hegelians as well as to all forms of pantheistic Súfism which regard absorption in a universal life or soul as the final aim and salvation of man.<sup>2</sup> The moral and religious ideal of man is not self-negation but self-affirmation, and he attains to this ideal

<sup>1</sup> Kor. ch. 23, v. 14: "Blessed is God, the best of those who create."

<sup>2</sup> Cf. his note on "Islam and Mysticism" (*The New Era*, 1916, p. 250).

by becoming more and more individual, more and more unique. The Prophet said, '*Takhallaqú bi-akhláq Allah,*' 'Create in yourselves the attributes of God.' Thus man becomes unique by becoming more and more like the most unique Individual. What then is life? It is individual: its highest form, so far, is the Ego (*Khudí*) in which the individual becomes a self-contained exclusive centre. Physically as well as spiritually man is a self-contained centre, but he is not yet a complete individual. The greater his distance from God, the less his individuality. He who comes nearest to God is the completest person. Not that he is finally absorbed in God. On the contrary, he absorbs God into himself.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Here Iqbal adds: "Mauláná Rúmi has very beautifully expressed this idea. The Prophet, when a little boy, was once lost in the desert. His nurse Halíma was almost beside herself with grief, but while roaming the desert in search of the boy she heard a voice saying:



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The true person not only absorbs the world of matter; by mastering it he absorbs God Himself into his Ego. Life is a forward assimilative movement. It removes all obstructions in its march by assimilating them. Its essence is the continual creation of desires and ideals, and for the purpose of its preservation and expansion it has invented or developed out of itself certain instruments, *e.g.* senses, intellect, etc., which help it to assimilate obstructions.<sup>1</sup> The greatest obstacle in the way of life is matter, Nature; yet Nature is not evil, since it enables the inner powers of life to unfold themselves.

‘Do not grieve, he will not be lost to thee;  
Nay, the whole world will be lost in him.’

The true individual cannot be lost in the world; it is the world that is lost in him. I go a step further and say, prefixing a new half-verse to a hemistich of Rímí (‘Transl. I. 1325):

In his will that which God wills becomes lost:  
‘How shall a man believe this saying?’”

<sup>1</sup> Transl. I. 289 foll.

“The Ego attains to freedom by the removal of all obstructions in its way. It is partly free, partly determined,<sup>1</sup> and reaches fuller freedom by approaching the Individual who is most free—God. In one word, life is an endeavour for freedom.

## “2. THE EGO AND CONTINUATION OF PERSONALITY

“In man the centre of life becomes an Ego or Person. Personality is a state of tension and can continue only if that state is maintained. If the state of tension is not maintained, relaxation will ensue. Since personality, or the state of tension, is the most valuable achievement of man, he should see that he does not revert to a state of relaxation. That which tends to maintain

<sup>1</sup> According to the Tradition, “The true Faith is between predestination and freewill.”

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the state of tension tends to make us immortal. Thus the idea of personality gives us a standard of value: it settles the problem of good and evil. That which fortifies personality is good, that which weakens it is bad. Art,<sup>1</sup> religion, and ethics<sup>2</sup> must be judged from the standpoint of personality. My criticism of Plato<sup>3</sup> is directed against those philosophical systems which hold up death rather than life as their ideal—systems which ignore the greatest obstruction to life, namely, matter, and

<sup>1</sup> Transl. l. 673 foll. In a note on "Our Prophet's criticism of contemporary Arabian poetry" (*The New Era*, 1916, p. 251) Iqbal writes: "The ultimate end of all human activity is Life—glorious, powerful, exuberant. All human art must be subordinated to this final purpose, and the value of everything must be determined in reference to its life-yielding capacity. The highest art is that which awakens our dormant will-force and nerves us to face the trials of life manfully. All that brings drowsiness and makes us shut our eyes to Reality around, on the mastery of which alone Life depends, is a message of decay and death. There should be no opium-eating in Art. The dogma of Art for the sake of Art is a clever invention of decadence to cheat us out of life and power."

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* l. 537 foll.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* l. 631 foll.

teach us to run away from it instead of absorbing it.

“As in connexion with the question of the freedom of the Ego we have to face the problem of matter, similarly in connexion with its immortality we have to face the problem of time.<sup>1</sup> Bergson has taught us that time is not an infinite line (in the spatial sense of the word ‘line’) through which we must pass whether we wish it or not. This idea of time is adulterated. Pure time has no length. Personal immortality is an aspiration: you can have it if you make an effort to achieve it. It depends on our adopting in this life modes of thought and activity which tend to maintain the state of tension. Buddhism, Persian Sufism, and allied forms of ethics will not serve our purpose. But they are not wholly useless, because after periods of great activity we need

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* l. 1531 foll.

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opiates, narcotics, for some time. These forms of thought and action are like nights in the days of life. Thus, if our activity is directed towards the maintenance of a state of tension, the shock of death is not likely to affect it. After death there may be an interval of relaxation, as the Koran speaks of a *barzakh*, or intermediate state, which lasts until the Day of Resurrection.<sup>1</sup> Only those Egos will survive this state of relaxation who have taken good care during the present life. Although life abhors repetition in its evolution, yet on Bergson's principles the resurrection of the body too, as Wildon Carr says, is quite possible. By breaking up time into moments we spatialise it and then find difficulty in getting over it. The true nature of time is reached when we look into our deeper self.<sup>2</sup> Real time is life itself, which can preserve itself

<sup>1</sup> Kor. ch. 23, v. 102.

<sup>2</sup> Transl. I. 1549 foll.

by maintaining that particular state of tension (personality) which it has so far achieved. We are subject to time so long as we look upon time as something spatial. Spatialised time is a fetter which life has forged for itself in order to assimilate the present environment. In reality we are timeless, and it is possible to realise our timelessness even in this life. This revelation, however, can be momentary only.

### “3. THE EDUCATION OF THE EGO

“The Ego is fortified by love (*‘ishq*).<sup>1</sup> This word is used in a very wide sense and means the desire to assimilate, to absorb. Its highest form is the creation of values and ideals and the endeavour to realise them. Love individualises the lover as well as the beloved. The effort to realise the most unique individuality individualises the seeker

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* I. 323 foll.

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and implies the individuality of the sought, for nothing else would satisfy the nature of the seeker. As love fortifies the Ego, asking (*su'ál*) weakens it.<sup>1</sup> All that is achieved without personal effort comes under *su'ál*. The son of a rich man who inherits his father's wealth is an 'asker' (beggar); so is every one who thinks the thoughts of others. Thus, in order to fortify the Ego we should cultivate love, *i.e.* the power of assimilative action, and avoid all forms of 'asking,' *i.e.* inaction. The lesson of assimilative action is given by the life of the Prophet, at least to a Mohammedan.

"In another part of the poem<sup>2</sup> I have hinted at the general principles of Moslem ethics and have tried to reveal their meaning in connexion with the idea of personality. The Ego in its movement towards uniqueness has to pass through three stages :

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* l. 435 foll.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* l. 815 foll.

- (a) Obedience to the Law.
- (b) Self-control, which is the highest form of self-consciousness or Ego-hood.<sup>1</sup>
- (c) Divine vicegerency.<sup>2</sup>

“This (divine vicegerency, *nīyābat-i ilāhī*) is the third and last stage of human development on earth. The *nāʾib* (vicegerent) is the vicegerent of God on earth. He is the completest Ego, the goal of humanity,<sup>3</sup> the acme of life both in mind and body; in him the discord of our mental life becomes a harmony. The highest power is united in him with the highest knowledge. In his life, thought and action, instinct and reason, become one. He is the last fruit of the tree of humanity, and all the trials of a painful evolution

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* l. 849 foll.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* l. 893 foll.

<sup>3</sup> Man already possesses the germ of vicegerency, as God says in the Koran (ch. 2, v. 28): “Lo, I will appoint a *khalīfa* (vicegerent) on the earth.” Cf. Transl. l. 434.



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are justified because he is to come at the end. He is the real ruler of mankind; his kingdom is the kingdom of God on earth. Out of the richness of his nature he lavishes the wealth of life on others, and brings them nearer and nearer to himself. The more we advance in evolution, the nearer we get to him. In approaching him we are raising ourselves in the scale of life. The development of humanity both in mind and body is a condition precedent to his birth. For the present he is a mere ideal; but the evolution of humanity is tending towards the production of an ideal race of more or less unique individuals who will become his fitting parents. Thus the Kingdom of God on earth means the democracy of more or less unique individuals, presided over by the most unique individual possible on this earth. Nietzsche had a glimpse of this ideal race, but his atheism and

aristocratic prejudices marred his whole conception.”<sup>1</sup>

Every one, I suppose, will acknowledge that the substance of the *Asrār-i Khudī* is striking enough to command attention. In the poem, naturally, this philosophy presents itself under a different aspect. Its audacity of thought and phrase is less apparent, its logical brilliancy dissolves in the glow of feeling and imagination, and it wins the heart before taking possession of the

<sup>1</sup> Writing of “Muslim Democracy” in *The New Era*, 1916, p. 251, Iqbal says: “The Democracy of Europe—overshadowed by socialistic agitation and anarchical fear—originated mainly in the economic regeneration of European societies. Nietzsche, however, abhors this ‘rule of the herd’ and, hopeless of the plebeian, he bases all higher culture on the cultivation and growth of an Aristocracy of Supermen. But is the plebeian so absolutely hopeless? The Democracy of Islam did not grow out of the extension of economic opportunity; it is a spiritual principle based on the assumption that every human being is a centre of latent power, the possibilities of which can be developed by cultivating a certain type of character. Out of the plebeian material Islam has formed men of the noblest type of life and power. Is not, then, the Democracy of early Islam an experimental refutation of the ideas of Nietzsche?”

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mind. The artistic quality of the poem is remarkable when we consider that its language is not the author's own. I have done my best to preserve as much of this as a literal prose translation would allow. Many passages of the original are poetry of the kind that, once read, is not easily forgotten, *e.g.* the description of the Ideal Man as a deliverer for whom the world is waiting, and the noble invocation which brings the book to an end. Like Jalálu'ddín Rûmî, Iqbal is fond of introducing fables and apologues to relieve the argument and illustrate his meaning with more force and point than would be possible otherwise.

On its first appearance the *Asrâr-i Khudî* took by storm the younger generation of Indian Moslems. "Iqbal," wrote one of them, "has come amongst us as a Messiah and has stirred the dead with life." It remains to be seen in

what direction the awakened ones will march. <sup>9</sup> Will they be satisfied with a glorious but distant vision of the City of God, or will they adapt the new doctrine to other ends than those which its author has in view? Notwithstanding that he explicitly denounces the idea of nationalism, his admirers are already protesting that he does not mean what he says.

How far the influence of his work may ultimately go I will not attempt to prophesy. It has been said of him that "he is a man of his age and a man in advance of his age; he is also a man in disagreement with his age." We cannot regard his ideas as typical of any section of his co-religionists. They involve a radical change in the Moslem mind, and their real importance is not to be measured by the fact that such a change is unlikely to occur within a calculable time.



## PROLOGUE

WHEN the world-illuming sun rushed  
upon Night like a brigand,  
My weeping bedewed the face of the  
rose.

My tears washed away sleep from the  
eye of the narcissus,

My passion wakened the grass and  
made it grow.

The Gardener taught me to sing with  
power,

He sowed a verse and reaped a sword.

In the soil he planted only the seed of  
my tears

And wove my lament with the garden,  
as warp and woof.

## 2 SECRETS OF THE SELF

'Tho' I am but a mote, the radiant sun  
is mine :

- 10 Within my bosom are a hundred dawns.  
My dust is brighter than Jamshíd's cup,<sup>1</sup>  
It knows things that are yet unborn in  
the world.

My thought hunted down and slung  
from the saddle a deer

That has not yet leaped forth from the  
covert of non-existence.

- Fair is my garden ere yet the leaves  
are green :

15 Full-blown roses are hidden in the skirt  
of my garment.

I struck dumb the musicians where  
they were gathered together,

I smote the heartstrings of all that  
heard me,

Because the lute of my genius hath a  
rare melody :

- 20 Even to comrades my song is strange.

<sup>1</sup> Jamshíd, one of the mythical Persian kings, is said to have possessed a marvellous cup in which the whole world was displayed to him.

## SECRETS OF THE SELF 3

I am born in the world as a new sun,  
I have not learned the ways and fashions  
of the sky :

Not yet have the stars fled before my  
splendour,

Not yet is my quicksilver astir ;

Untouched is the sea by my dancing  
rays,

25

Untouched are the mountains by my  
crimson hue.

The eye of existence is not familiar  
with me ;

I rise trembling, afraid to show myself.

From the East my dawn arrived and  
routed Night,

A fresh dew settled on the rose of the  
world.

30

I am waiting for the votaries that rise  
at dawn :

Oh, happy they who shall worship my  
fire !

I have no need of the ear of To-day,

I am the voice of the poet of To-morrow.



#### 4 SECRETS OF THE SELF

My own age does not understand my  
35 deep meanings,

My Joseph is not for this market.

I despair of my old companions,

My Sinai burns for sake of the Moses  
who is coming.

Their sea is silent, like dew,

But my dew is storm-ridden, like the  
40 ocean.

My song is of another world than theirs:  
This bell calls other travellers to take  
the road.

How many a poet after his death

Opened our eyes when his own were  
closed,

And journeyed forth again from  
45 nothingness

When roses blossomed o'er the earth of  
his grave!

Albeit caravans have passed through  
this desert,

They passed, as a camel steps, with  
little sound.

## SECRETS OF THE SELF 5

But I am a lover : loud crying is my  
faith :

The clamour of Judgement Day is one  
of my minions. 50

My song exceeds the range of the chord,  
Yet I do not fear that my lute will  
break.

"Twere better for the waterdrop not to  
know my torrent,  
Whose fury should rather madden the  
sea.

No river will contain my Omán :<sup>1</sup> 55  
My flood requires whole seas to hold it.  
Unless the bud expand into a bed of  
roses,

It is unworthy of my spring - cloud's  
bounty.

Lightnings slumber within my soul,  
I sweep over mountain and plain. 60  
Wrestle with my sea, if thou art a  
plain ;

<sup>1</sup> The Sea of Omán is a name given by the Arabs to  
the Persian Gulf.

## 6 SECRETS OF THE SELF

Receive my lightning, if thou art a  
Sinai.

The Fountain of Life hath been given  
me to drink,

I have been made an adept of the  
mystery of Life.

The speck of dust was vitalised by my  
65 burning song :

It unfolded wings and became a firefly.

No one hath told the secret which I  
will tell

Or threaded a pearl of thought like  
mine.

Come, if thou would'st know the secret  
of everlasting life !

Come, if thou would'st win both earth  
70 and heaven !

The old Guru of the Sky taught me  
this lore,

I cannot hide it from my comrades.

O Saki ! arise and pour wine into the  
cup,

## SECRETS OF THE SELF 7

Clear the vexation of 'Time from my  
heart!

The sparkling liquor that flows from  
Zemzem—<sup>1</sup> 75

Were it a beggar, a king would pay  
homage to it.

It makes thought more sober and wise,  
It makes the keen eye keener,  
It gives to a straw the weight of a  
mountain,

And to foxes the strength of lions. 80

It causes dust to soar to the Pleiades  
And a drop of water swell to the  
breadth of the sea.

It turns silence into the din of Judge-  
ment Day,

It makes the foot of the partridge red  
with blood of the hawk.

Arise and pour pure wine into my  
cup, 85

Pour moonbeams into the dark night  
of my thought,

<sup>1</sup> The holy well at Mecca.

## 8 SECRETS OF THE SELF

That I may lead home the wanderer  
And imbue the idle looker-on with rest-  
less impatience ;

And advance hotly on a new quest  
And become known as the champion of  
90 a new spirit ;

And be to people of insight as the  
pupil to the eye,  
And sink into the ear of the world, like  
a voice ;

And exalt the worth of Poesy  
And sprinkle the dry herbs with my  
tears.

Inspired by the genius of the Master  
95 of Rúm,<sup>1</sup>

I rehearse the sealed book of secret  
lore.

His soul is the source of the flames,  
I am but as the spark that gleams for a  
moment.

<sup>1</sup> Jalálu'ddín Rúmí, the greatest mystical poet of Persia (A.D. 1207-1273). Most of his life was passed at Iconium in Galatia, for which reason he is generally known as "Rúmí," *i.e.* "the Anatolian."

## SECRETS OF THE SELF 9

His burning candle consumed me, the  
moth ;

His wine overwhelmed my goblet. 100

The Master of Rúm transmuted my  
earth to gold

And clothed my barren dust with  
beauty.

The grain of sand set forth from the  
desert,

That it might win the radiance of the sun.

I am a wave and I will come to rest in  
his sea, 105

That I may make the glistening pearl  
mine own.

I who am drunken with the wine of his  
song

Will draw life from the breath of his  
words.

'Twas night: my heart would fain  
lament,

The silence was filled with my cries to  
God. 110

## 10 SECRETS OF THE SELF

I was complaining of the sorrows of  
the world  
And bewailing the emptiness of my cup.  
At last mine eye could endure no more,  
Broken with fatigue it went to sleep.  
There appeared the Master, formed in  
115 the mould of Truth,  
Who wrote the Koran of Persia.<sup>1</sup>  
He said, "O frenzied lover,  
'Take a draught of love's pure wine.  
Strike the chords of thine heart and  
rouse a tumultuous strain,  
Dash thine head against the cupping-  
glass and thine eye against the  
120 lancet!  
Make thy laughter the source of a  
hundred sighs,  
Make the hearts of men bleed with thy  
tears!  
How long wilt thou be silent, like a bud?  
Sell thy fragrance cheap, like the rose!

<sup>1</sup> This refers to the famous *Masnawí* of Jalálu'ddín Rúmí.

## SECRETS OF THE SELF 11

Tongue-tied, thou art in pain : 125

Cast thyself upon the fire, like rue !<sup>1</sup>

Like the bell, break silence at last, and  
from every limb

Utter forth a lamentation !

Thou art fire : fill the world with thy  
glow !

Make others burn with thy burning ! 130

Proclaim the secrets of the old wine-  
seller ;<sup>2</sup>

Be thou a surge of wine, and the crystal  
cup thy robe !

Shatter the mirror of fear,

Break the bottles in the bazaar !

Like the reed-flute, bring a message  
from the reeds ; 135

Give to Majnún a message from Lailá !<sup>3</sup>

Create a new style for thy song,

Enrich the feast with thy piercing  
strains !

<sup>1</sup> Rue - seed, which is burned for the purpose of fumigation, crackles in the fire.

<sup>2</sup> "Wine" signifies the mysteries of divine love.

<sup>3</sup> Majnún is the Orlando Furioso of Arabia.



## 12 SECRETS OF THE SELF

Up, and re-inspire every living soul !

Say ' Arise ! ' and by that word

140       quicken the living !

Up, and set thy feet on another path ;

Put aside the passionate melancholy of  
old !

Become familiar with the delight of  
singing ;

O bell of the caravan, awake ! ”

At these words my bosom was en-

145       kindled

And swelled with emotion like the  
flute ;

I rose like music from the string

To prepare a Paradise for the ear.

I unveiled the mystery of the Self

150 And disclosed its wondrous secret.

My being was as an unfinished statue,

Uncomely, worthless, good for nothing.

Love chiselled me : I became a man

And gained knowledge of the nature of  
the universe.

## SECRETS OF THE SELF 13

I have seen the movement of the  
sinews of the sky, 155

And the blood coursing in the veins of  
the moon.

Many a night I wept for Man's sake  
That I might tear the veil from Life's  
mysteries,

And extract the secret of Life's con-  
stitution

From the laboratory of phenomena. 160

I who give beauty to this night, like  
the moon,

Am as dust in devotion to the pure  
Faith (Islam)—

A Faith renowned in hill and dale,  
Which kindles in men's hearts a flame  
of undying song :

It sowed an atom and reaped a sun, 165

It harvested a hundred poets like Rúmí  
and Attár.

I am a sigh : I will mount to the  
heavens ;

I am a breath, yet am I sprung of fire.

## 14 SECRETS OF THE SELF

Driven onward by high thoughts, my pen  
170 Cast abroad the secret of this veil,  
That the drop may become co-equal  
with the sea

And the grain of sand grow into a  
Sahara.

Poetising is not the aim of this *masnaví*,  
Beauty-worshipping and love-making  
is not its aim.

I am of India : Persian is not my native  
175 tongue ;

I am like the crescent moon : my cup  
is not full.

Do not seek from me charm of style  
in exposition,

Do not seek from me Khánsár and  
Isfahan.<sup>1</sup>

Although the language of Hind is  
sweet as sugar,

Yet sweeter is the fashion of Persian  
180 speech.

<sup>1</sup> Khánsár, which lies about a hundred miles north-west of Isfahan, was the birth-place of several Persian poets.

## SECRETS OF THE SELF 15

My mind was enchanted by its loveliness,  
My pen became as a twig of the Burning  
Bush.

Because of the loftiness of my thoughts,  
Persian alone is suitable to them.

O Reader, do not find fault with the  
wine-cup,

185

But consider attentively the taste of  
the wine.

## I

*Showing that the system of the universe originates in the Self, and that the continuation of the life of all individuals depends on strengthening the Self.*

THE form of existence is an effect of  
the Self,

Whatsoever thou seest is a secret of  
the Self.

When the Self awoke to consciousness,  
190 It revealed the universe of Thought.

A hundred worlds are hidden in its  
essence :

Self-affirmation brings Not-self to light.  
By the Self the seed of hostility is sown  
in the world :

It imagines itself to be other than  
itself.

1    SECRETS OF THE SELF 17

It makes from itself the forms of  
others 195

In order to multiply the pleasure of  
strife.

It is slaying by the strength of its  
arm

That it may become conscious of its  
own strength.

Its self-deceptions are the essence of  
Life ;

Like the rose, it lives by bathing itself  
in blood. 200

For the sake of a single rose it destroys  
a hundred rose-gardens

And makes a hundred lamentations in  
quest of a single melody.

For one sky it produces a hundred new  
moons,

And for one word a hundred discourses.

The excuse for this wastefulness and  
cruelty 205

Is the shaping and perfecting of spiritual  
beauty.

## 18 SECRETS OF THE SELF 1

The loveliness of Shírín justifies the  
anguish of Farhád,<sup>1</sup>

The fragrant navel justifies a hundred  
musk-deer.

'Tis the fate of moths to consume in  
flame :

210 The suffering of moths is justified by  
the candle.

The pencil of the Self limned a hundred  
to-days

In order to achieve the dawn of a single  
morrow.

Its flames burned a hundred Abrahams<sup>2</sup>

That the lamp of one Mohammed  
might be lighted.

215 Subject, object, means, and causes—

They all exist for the purpose of  
action.

<sup>1</sup> Shírín was loved by the Persian emperor Khusrau Parwíz. Farhád fell in love with her and cast himself down a precipice on hearing a false rumour of her death.

<sup>2</sup> Abraham is said to have been cast on a burning pile by order of Nimrod and miraculously preserved from harm.

1     **SECRETS OF THE SELF** 19

The Self rises, kindles, falls, glows,  
breathes,

Burns, shines, walks, and flies.

The spaciousness of Time is its arena,  
Heaven is a billow of the dust on its  
road.

220

From its rose-planting the world  
abounds in roses ;

Night is born of its sleep, day springs  
from its waking.

It divided its flame into sparks  
And taught the understanding to  
worship particulars.

It dissolved itself and created the atoms, 225  
It was scattered for a little while and  
created the sands.

Then it wearied of dispersion  
And by re-uniting itself it became the  
mountains.

'Tis the nature of the Self to manifest  
itself :

In every atom slumbers the might of  
the Self.

230



## 20 SECRETS OF THE SELF I

Power that is unexpressed and inert  
Chains the faculties which lead to  
action.

Inasmuch as the life of the universe  
comes from the strength of the  
Self,

Life is in proportion to this strength.

When a drop of water gets the Self's  
235 lesson by heart,

It makes its worthless existence a pearl.  
Wine is formless because its self is  
weak ;

It receives a form by favour of the cup.  
Although the cup of wine assumes a  
form,

240 It is indebted to us for its motion.

When the mountain loses its self, it  
turns into sands

And complains that the sea surges over  
it ;

But the wave, so long as it remains a  
wave in the sea's bosom,

Makes itself a rider on the sea's back.

I     SECRETS OF THE SELF     21

Light has been a beggar since the eye  
first rolled 245

And moved to and fro in search of  
beauty ;

But forasmuch as the grass found a  
means of growth in its self,

Its aspiration clove the breast of the  
garden.

The candle too concatenated itself

And built itself out of atoms ; 250

Then it made a practice of melting  
itself away and fled from its self

Until at last it trickled down from its  
own eye, like tears.

If the bezel had been more self-secure  
by nature,

It would not have suffered wounds,

But since it derives its value from the  
superscription, 255

Its shoulder is galled by the burden of  
another's name.

Because the earth is firmly based on  
self-existence,

## 22 SECRETS OF THE SELF 1

The captive moon goes round it perpetually.

The being of the sun is stronger than that of the earth :

Therefore is the earth bewitched by the  
260 sun's eye.

The glory of the plane fixes our gaze,  
The mountains are enriched by its  
majesty :

Its raiment is woven of fire,

Its origin is one self-assertive seed.

When Life gathers strength from the  
265 Self,

The river of Life expands into an  
ocean.

## II

*Showing that the life of the Self  
comes from forming desires and bringing  
them to birth.*

LIFE is preserved by purpose :  
Because of the goal its caravan-bell  
tinkles.

Life is latent in seeking,  
Its origin is hidden in desire. 270

Keep desire alive in thy heart,  
Lest thy little dust become a tomb.  
Desire is the soul of this world of hue  
and scent,

The nature of every thing is faithful to  
desire.

Desire sets the heart dancing in the  
breast, 275

## 24 SECRETS OF THE SELF II

And by its glow the breast is made  
bright as a mirror.

It gives to earth the power of soaring,  
It is a Khizr to the Moses of perception.<sup>1</sup>

From the flame of desire the heart  
takes life,

And when it takes life, all dies that is  
280 not true.

When it refrains from forming wishes,  
Its pinion breaks and it cannot soar.

Desire is an emotion of the Self :

It is a restless wave of the Self's sea.

285 Desire is a noose for hunting ideals,  
A binder of the book of deeds.

Negation of desire is death to the living,  
Even as absence of burning extinguishes  
the flame.

What is the source of our wakeful eye?  
Our delight in seeing hath taken visible  
290 shape.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Koran, ch. 18, vv. 64-80. Khizr represents the mystic seer whose actions are misjudged by persons of less insight.

## II SECRETS OF THE SELF 25

The partridge's leg is derived from the  
elegance of its gait,

The nightingale's beak from its en-  
deavour to sing.

Away from the reed-bed, the reed  
became happy :

The music was released from its  
prison.<sup>1</sup>

Why does the mind strive after new  
discoveries and scale the heavens ? 295

Knowest thou what works this miracle?

'Tis desire that enriches Life,

And the intellect is a child of its  
womb.

What are social organisation, customs,  
and laws ?

What is the secret of the novelties of 300  
science ?

A desire which broke through by its  
own strength

And burst forth from the heart and  
took shape.

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* the reed was made into a flute.

## 26 SECRETS OF THE SELF II

Nose, hand, brain, eye, and ear,  
Thought, imagination, feeling, memory,  
and understanding—

All these are weapons devised for self-  
305 preservation

By him that rides into the battle of  
Life.

The object of science and art is not  
knowledge,

The object of the garden is not the bud  
and the flower.

Science is an instrument for the preser-  
vation of Life,

Science is a means of establishing the  
310 Self.

Science and art are servants of Life,

Slaves born and bred in its house.

Rise, O thou who art strange to Life's  
mystery,

Rise intoxicated with the wine of an  
ideal !

If thou art an ideal, thou wilt shine as  
315 the dawn

II SECRETS OF THE SELF 27

And be to all else as a blazing fire.

If thou art an ideal, thou art higher  
than Heaven—

Winning, captivating, enchanting men's  
hearts ;

A destroyer of ancient falsehood,

Fraught with turmoil, an embodiment  
of the Last Day.

320

We live by forming ideals,

We glow with the sunbeams of desire !



### III

*Showing that the Self is strengthened  
by Love.<sup>1</sup>*

THE luminous point whose name is the  
Self  
Is the life-spark beneath our dust.  
325 By Love it is made more lasting,  
More living, more burning, more  
glowing.  
From Love proceeds the radiance of  
its being  
And the development of its unknown  
possibilities.  
Its nature gathers fire from Love,  
330 Love instructs it to illumine the world.

<sup>1</sup> For the sense which Iqbal attaches to the word  
"love," see the Introduction, p. xxv.

### III SECRETS OF THE SELF 29

Love fears neither sword nor dagger,  
Love is not born of water and air and  
earth.

Love makes peace and war in the  
world,

The Fountain of Life is Love's flashing  
sword.

The hardest rocks are shivered by  
Love's glance : 335

Love of God at last becomes wholly  
God.

Learn thou to love, and seek to be  
loved :

Seek an eye like Noah's, a heart like  
Job's !

Transmute thy handful of earth into  
gold,

Kiss the threshold of a Perfect Man !<sup>1</sup> 340

Like Rúmí, light thy candle

And burn Rúm in the fire of Tabríz !<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A prophet or saint.

<sup>2</sup> See note on l. 95. Tabríz is an allusion to Shams-i Tabríz, the spiritual director of Jalálu'ddin Rúmí.

### 30 SECRETS OF THE SELF III

There is a beloved hidden within thine  
heart :

I will show him to thee, if thou hast  
eyes to see.

345 His lovers are fairer than the fair,  
Sweeter and comelier and more beloved.  
By love of him the heart is made strong  
And earth rubs shoulders with the  
Pleiades.

The soil of Najd was quickened by his  
grace

And fell into a rapture and rose to  
350 the skies.<sup>1</sup>

In the Moslem's heart is the home of  
Mohammed,

All our glory is from the name of  
Mohammed.

Sinai is but an eddy of the dust of his  
house,

The sanctuary of the Ka'ba is his  
dwelling-place.

<sup>1</sup> Najd, the Highlands of Arabia, is celebrated in love-romance. I need only mention Lailá and Majnún.

### III SECRETS OF THE SELF 31

Eternity is less than a moment of his  
time, 355

Eternity receives increase from his  
essence.

He slept on a mat of rushes,  
But the crown of Chosroes was under  
his people's feet.

He chose the nightly solitude of  
Mount Hirá,

And he founded a state and laws and  
government. 360

He passed many a night with sleepless  
eyes

In order that the Moslems might sleep  
on the throne of Persia.

In the hour of battle, iron was melted  
by his sword ;

In the hour of prayer, tears fell like  
rain from his eye.

When he was called to aid, his sword  
answered " Amen " 365

And extirpated the race of kings.

He instituted new laws in the world,

## 32 SECRETS OF THE SELF III

He brought the empires of antiquity  
to an end.

With the key of religion he opened the  
door of this world :

The womb of the world never bore his  
370 like.

In his sight high and low were one,

He sat with his slave at one table.

The daughter of the chieftain of Tai  
was taken prisoner in battle<sup>1</sup>

And brought into that exalted presence;

375 Her feet in chains, unveiled,

And her neck bowed with shame.

When the Prophet saw that the poor  
girl had no veil,

He covered her face with his own  
veil.

We are more naked than that lady of  
Tai,

We are unveiled before the nations of  
380 the world.

<sup>1</sup> Her father, Hátim of Tai, is proverbial in the East  
for his hospitality.

### III SECRETS OF THE SELF 33

In him is our trust on the Day of  
Judgement,

And in this world too he is our  
protector.

Both his favour and his wrath are  
entirely a mercy :

That is a mercy to his friends and this  
to his foes.

He opened the gates of mercy to his  
enemies,

385

He gave to Mecca the message, "No  
blame shall be laid upon you."

We who know not the bonds of  
country

Resemble sight, which is one though it  
be the light of two eyes.

We belong to the Hijáz and China  
and Persia,

Yet we are the dew of one smiling  
dawn.

390

We are all under the spell of the eye  
of the cupbearer from Mecca,

We are united as wine and cup.

### 34 SECRETS OF THE SELF III

He burnt clean away distinctions of  
lineage,  
His fire consumed this trash and rubble.  
We are like a rose with many petals  
395 but with one perfume :  
He is the soul of this society, and he  
is one.  
We were the secret concealed in his  
heart :  
He spake out fearlessly, and we were  
revealed.  
The song of love for him fills my silent reed,  
400 A hundred notes throb in my bosom.  
How shall I tell what devotion he  
inspires ?  
A block of dry wood wept at parting  
from him.<sup>1</sup>  
The Moslem's being is where he  
manifests his glory :  
Many a Sinai springs from the dust on  
his path.

<sup>1</sup> The story of the pulpit that wept when Mohammed descended from it occurs, I think, in the *Masnawi*.

My image was created by his mirror, 405  
My dawn rises from the sun of his  
breast.

My repose is a perpetual fever,  
My evening hotter than the morning  
of Judgement Day :<sup>1</sup>

He is the April cloud and I his garden,  
My vine is bedewed with his rain. 410

I sowed mine eye in the field of Love  
And reaped a harvest of delight.

"The soil of Medina is sweeter than  
both worlds :

Oh, happy the town where dwells the  
Beloved !"<sup>2</sup>

I am lost in admiration of the style of  
Mullá Jámí : 415

His verse and prose are a remedy for  
my immaturity.

He has written poetry overflowing with  
beautiful ideas

<sup>1</sup> When, according to Mohammedan belief, the sun will rise in the west.

<sup>2</sup> A quotation from the *Masnavi*. The Prophet was buried at Medina.



### 36 SECRETS OF THE SELF III

And has threaded pearls in praise of  
the Master—

“Mohammed is the preface to the  
book of the universe :

420 All the world are slaves and he is the  
Master.”

From the wine of Love spring many  
qualities :

Amongst the attributes of Love is  
blind devotion.

The saint of Bistám, who in devotion  
was unique,

Abstained from eating a water-melon.<sup>1</sup>

425 Be a lover constant in devotion to thy  
beloved,

That thou mayst cast thy noose and  
capture God.

Sojourn for a while on the Hirá of the  
heart,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Báýazíd of Bistám died in A.D. 875. He refused to eat a water-melon, saying he had no assurance that the Prophet had ever tasted that fruit.

<sup>2</sup> Mohammed used to retire to a cave on Mount Hirá, near Mecca, for the purpose of solitary meditation and other ascetic observances.

Abandon self and flee to God.

Strengthened by God, return to thy  
self

And break the heads of the Lát and  
Uzzá of sensuality.<sup>1</sup>

430

By the might of Love evoke an army,  
Reveal thyself on the Fárán of Love,<sup>2</sup>  
That the Lord of the Ka'ba may show  
thee favour

And interpret to thee the text, "Lo, I  
will appoint a vicegerent on the  
earth."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lát and Uzzá were goddesses worshipped by the heathen Arabs.

<sup>2</sup> Fárán, name of a mountain in the neighbourhood of Mecca.

<sup>3</sup> Koran, ch. 2, v. 28. In these words, which were addressed to the angels, God foretold the creation of Adam.

## IV

*Showing that the Self is weakened by asking.*

O THOU who hast gathered taxes from  
435 lions,

Thy need hath caused thee to become  
a fox in disposition.

Thy maladies are the result of indigence :

This disease is the source of thy pain.

It is robbing thine high thoughts of  
their dignity

And putting out the light of thy noble  
440 imagination.

Quaff rosy wine from the jar of existence !

IV SECRETS OF THE SELF 39

Snatch thy money from the purse of  
Time!

Like Omar, come down from thy  
camel!<sup>1</sup>

Beware of incurring obligations, beware!

How long wilt thou sue for office 445

And ride like children on a woman's  
back?

A nature that fixes its gaze on the  
sky

Becomes debased by receiving benefits.

By asking, poverty is made more ab-  
ject;

By begging, the beggar is made poorer. 450

Asking disintegrates the Self

And deprives of illumination the Sinai-  
bush of the Self.

Do not scatter thy handful of dust;

Like the moon, scrape food from thine  
own side!

Albeit thou art poor and wretched 455

<sup>1</sup> The Caliph Omar was a man of simple habits and self-reliant character.

## 40 SECRETS OF THE SELF IV

And overwhelmed by affliction,  
Seek not thy daily bread from the  
bounty of another,

Seek not waves of water from the  
fountain of the sun,

Lest thou be put to shame before the  
Prophet

On the Day when every soul shall be  
460 stricken with fear.

The moon gets sustenance from the  
table of the sun

And bears the brand of his bounty on  
her heart.

Pray God for courage! Wrestle with  
Fortune!

Do not sully the honour of the pure  
religion!

He who swept the rubbish of idols out  
465 of the Ka'ba

Said that God loves a man that earns  
his living.

Woe to him that accepts bounty from  
another's table

IV SECRETS OF THE SELF 41

And lets his neck be bent with  
benefits!

He hath consumed himself with the  
lightning of the favours bestowed  
on him,

He hath sold his honour for a paltry  
coin.

470

Happy the man who thirsting in the sun  
Does not crave of Khizr a cup of  
water!<sup>1</sup>

His brow is not moist with the shame  
of beggary;

He is a man still, not a piece of clay.

That noble youth walks under heaven

475

With his head erect like the pine.

Are his hands empty? The more is he  
master of himself.

Do his fortunes languish? The more  
alert is he.

The beggar's wallet is like a boat tossing  
in waves of fire;

<sup>1</sup> Khizr is supposed to have drunk of the Fountain  
of Life.

## 42 SECRETS OF THE SELF IV

Sweet is a little dew gathered by  
480       one's own hand.

Be a man of honour, and like the  
      bubble

Keep thy cup inverted even in the  
      midst of the sea !<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The bubble is compared to an inverted cup, which  
of course receives nothing.

## V

*Showing that when the Self is strengthened by Love it gains dominion over the outward and inward forces of the universe.*

WHEN the Self is made strong by Love  
Its power rules the whole world.

The Heavenly Sage who adorned the  
sky with stars 485

Plucked these buds from the bough of  
the Self.

Its hand becomes God's hand,

The moon is split by its fingers.

It is the arbitrator in all the quarrels of  
the world,

Its command is obeyed by Darius and  
Jamshíd. 490



#### 44 SECRETS OF THE SELF v

I will tell thee a story of Bú Ali,<sup>1</sup>  
Whose name is renowned in India,  
Him who sang of the ancient rose-  
garden  
And discoursed to us about the lovely  
rose :

495 The air of his fluttering skirt  
Made a Paradise of this fire-born  
country.

His young disciple went one day to  
the bazaar—

The wine of Bú Ali's discourse had  
turned his head.

The governor of the city was coming  
along on horseback,

His servant and staff-bearer rode beside  
500 him.

The forerunner shouted, "O senseless  
one,

Do not get in the way of the governor's  
escort !"

<sup>1</sup> Sheikh Sharafu'ddín of Pánípat, who is better known as Bú Ali Qalandar, was a great saint. He died about A.D. 1325.

v    SECRETS OF THE SELF    45

But the dervish walked on with drooping head,

Sunk in the sea of his own thoughts.

The staff-bearer, drunken with pride,    505

Broke his staff on the head of the dervish,

Who stepped painfully out of the governor's way,

Sad and sorry, with a heavy heart.

He came to Bú Ali and complained

And released the tears from his eyes.    510

Like lightning that falls on mountains,

The Sheikh poured forth a fiery torrent of speech.

He let loose from his soul a strange fire,

He gave an order to his secretary :

“ Take thy pen and write a letter    515

From a dervish to a sultan !

Say, ‘ Thy governor has broken my servant's head ;

He has cast burning coals on his own life.

## 46 SECRETS OF THE SELF v

Arrest this wicked governor,  
Or else I will bestow thy kingdom on  
520 another.' ”

The letter of the saint who had access  
to God  
Caused the monarch to tremble in  
every limb.

His body was filled with aches,  
He grew as pale as the evening sun.  
He sought out a handcuff for the  
525 governor

And entreated Bú Ali to pardon this  
offence.

Khusrau, the sweet-voiced eloquent  
poet,<sup>1</sup>

Whose harmonies flow from the creative  
mind

And whose genius hath the soft brilliance  
of moonlight,

Was chosen to be the king's  
530 ambassador.

<sup>1</sup> Amír Khusrau of Delhi, the most celebrated of the Persian poets of India.

v SECRETS OF THE SELF 47

When he entered Bú Ali's presence  
and played his lute,

His song melted the fakir's soul like  
glass.

One strain of poesy bought the grace  
Of a majesty that was firm as a  
mountain.

Do not wound the hearts of dervishes, 535  
Do not throw thyself into burning fire !

## VI

*A tale of which the moral is that  
negation of the Self is a doctrine in-  
vented by the subject races of mankind  
in order that by this means they may sap  
and weaken the character of their rulers.*

HAST thou heard that in the time of  
old

'The sheep dwelling in a certain pasture  
So increased and multiplied  
540 That they feared no enemy ?  
At last, from the malice of Fate,  
Their breasts were smitten by a shaft  
of calamity.  
The tigers sprang forth from the jungle  
And rushed upon the sheepfold.

Conquest and dominion are signs of  
strength, 545

Victory is the manifestation of strength.  
Those fierce tigers beat the drum of  
sovereignty,

They deprived the sheep of freedom.  
Forasmuch as tigers must have their  
prey,

That meadow was crimsoned with the  
blood of the sheep. 550

One of the sheep which was clever and  
acute,

Old in years, cunning as a weather-  
beaten wolf,

Being grieved at the fate of his fellows  
And sorely vexed by the violence of  
the tigers,

Made complaint of the course of  
Destiny 555

And sought by craft to restore his  
fortunes.

The weak man, in order to preserve  
himself,

50 SECRETS OF THE SELF VI

Seeks devices from skilled intelligence.  
In slavery, for the sake of repelling  
harm,

The power of scheming becomes  
560 quickened,

And when the madness of revenge  
gains hold,

The mind of the slave meditates re-  
bellion.

“Ours is a hard knot,” said this sheep  
to himself,

“The ocean of our griefs hath no shore.  
By force we sheep cannot escape from  
565 the tiger :

Our legs are silver, his paws are steel.

’Tis not possible, however much one  
exhorts and counsels,

To create in a sheep the disposition of  
a wolf.

But to make the furious tiger a sheep  
—that is possible ;

To make him unmindful of his nature  
570 —that is possible.”

He became as a prophet inspired,  
And began to preach to the blood-  
thirsty tigers.

He cried out, "O ye insolent liars,  
Who wot not of a day of ill luck that  
shall continue for ever !<sup>1</sup>

I am possessed of spiritual power, 575  
I am an apostle sent by God for the  
tigers.

I come as a light for the eye that is  
dark,

I come to establish laws and give com-  
mandments.

Repent of your blameworthy deeds !  
O plotters of evil, bethink yourselves  
of good ! 580

Whoso is violent and strong is miser-  
able :

Life's solidity depends on self-denial.  
The spirit of the righteous is fed by  
fodder :

The vegetarian is pleasing unto God.

<sup>1</sup> These expressions are borrowed from the Koran.



## 52 SECRETS OF THE SELF VI

The sharpness of your teeth brings dis-  
585 grace upon you  
And makes the eye of your perception  
blind.

Paradise is for the weak alone,  
Strength is but a means to perdition.  
It is wicked to seek greatness and  
glory,  
590 Penury is sweeter than princedom.

Lightning does not threaten the corn-  
seed :  
If the seed become a stack, it is  
unwise.

If you are sensible, you will be a mote  
of sand, not a Sahara,  
So that you may enjoy the sunbeams.  
O thou that delightest in the slaughter  
595 of sheep,

Slay thy self, and thou wilt have  
honour !

Life is rendered unstable  
By violence, oppression, revenge, and  
exercise of power.

Though trodden underfoot, the grass  
grows up time after time

And washes the sleep of death from its  
eye again and again. 600

Forget thy self, if thou art wise !

If thou dost not forget thy self, thou  
art mad.

Close thine eyes, close thine ears, close  
thy lips,<sup>1</sup>

That thy thought may reach the lofty  
sky !

This pasturage of the world is naught,  
naught : 605

O fool, do not torment thyself for a  
phantom !”

The tiger-tribe was exhausted by hard  
struggles,

They had set their hearts on enjoyment  
of luxury.

This soporific advice pleased them,

In their stupidity they swallowed the  
charm of the sheep. 610

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from the *Masnavi*.

## 54 SECRETS OF THE SELF VI

He that used to make sheep his  
prey

Now embraced a sheep's religion.

The tigers took kindly to a diet of  
fodder :

At length their tigerish nature was  
broken.

615 The fodder blunted their teeth

And put out the awful flashings of  
their eyes.

By degrees courage ebbed from their  
breasts,

The sheen departed from the mirror.

That frenzy of uttermost exertion re-  
mained not,

620 That craving after action dwelt in their  
hearts no more.

They lost the power of ruling and the  
resolution to be independent,

They lost reputation, prestige, and  
fortune.

Their paws that were as iron became  
strengthless ;

VI SECRETS OF THE SELF 55

Their souls died and their bodies  
became tombs.

Bodily strength diminished while  
spiritual fear increased : 625

Spiritual fear robbed them of courage.  
Lack of courage produced a hundred  
diseases,—

Poverty, pusillanimity, lowmindedness.  
The wakeful tiger was lulled to slumber  
by the sheep's charm :

He called his decline Moral Culture. 630

## VII

*To the effect that Plato, whose thought has deeply influenced the mysticism and literature of Islam, followed the sheep's doctrine, and that we must be on our guard against his theories.<sup>1</sup>*

PLATO, the prime ascetic and sage,  
Was one of that ancient flock of sheep.

<sup>1</sup> The direct influence of Platonism on Moslem thought has been comparatively slight. When the Moslems began to study Greek philosophy, they turned to Aristotle. The genuine writings of Aristotle, however, were not accessible to them. They studied translations of books passing under his name, which were the work of Neoplatonists, so that what they believed to be Aristotelian doctrine was in fact the philosophy of Plotinus, Proclus, and the later Neoplatonic school. Indirectly, therefore, Plato has profoundly influenced the intellectual and spiritual development of Islam and may be called, if not the father of Mohammedan mysticism, at any rate its presiding genius.

VII SECRETS OF THE SELF 57

His Pegasus went astray in the darkness  
of philosophy  
And galloped over the mountains of  
Being.

He was so fascinated by the Ideal 635  
That he made head, eye, and ear of no  
account.

"To die," said he, "is the secret of  
Life:

The can't is glorified by being put  
out."

He dominates our thinking,  
His cup sends us to sleep and takes the  
world away from us. 640

He is a sheep in man's clothing,  
The soul of the Súfí bows to his  
authority.

He soared with his intellect to the  
highest heaven,

He called the world of phenomena a  
myth.

'Twas his work to dissolve the structure  
of Life 645

58 SECRETS OF THE SELF VII

And cut the bough of Life's fair tree  
asunder.

The thought of Plato regarded loss as  
profit,

His philosophy declared that being is  
not-being.

His nature drowsed and created a  
dream,

650 His mind's eye created a mirage.

Since he was without any taste for  
action,

His soul was enraptured by the non-  
existent.

He disbelieved in the material universe  
And became the creator of invisible  
Ideas.

Sweet is the world of phenomena to  
655 the living spirit,

Dear is the world of Ideas to the dead  
spirit :

Its gazelles have no grace of movement,  
Its partridges are denied the pleasure of  
walking daintily.

Its dewdrops are unable to quiver,  
 Its birds have no breath in their breasts, 660  
 Its seed does not desire to grow,  
 Its moths do not know how to flutter.  
 Our philosopher had no remedy but  
 flight :

He could not endure the noise of this  
 world.

He set his heart on the glow of a  
 quenched flame 665

And depicted a world steeped in opium.

He spread his wings towards the sky

And never came down to his nest again.

His phantasy is sunk in the jar of  
 heaven :

I know not whether it is the dregs or  
 the bricks.<sup>1</sup> 670

The peoples were poisoned by his  
 intoxication :

He slumbered and took no delight in  
 deeds.

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* it is worthless in either case. The egg-shaped wine-jar is supported by bricks in order to keep it in an upright position.



## VIII

*Concerning the true nature of poetry and  
the reform of Islamic literature.*

'Tis the brand of desire makes the blood  
of man run warm,  
By the lamp of desire this dust is  
enkindled.

676 By desire Life's cup is brimmed with wine,  
So that Life leaps to its feet and  
marches briskly on.

Life is occupied with conquest alone,  
And the one charm for conquest is desire.  
Life is the hunter and desire the snare,  
680 Desire is Love's message to Beauty.  
Wherefore doth desire swell continu-  
ously

VIII SECRETS OF THE SELF 61

The bass and treble of Life's song?

Whatsoever is good and fair and  
beautiful

Is our guide in the wilderness of  
seeking.

Its image becomes impressed on thine  
heart,

685

It creates desires in thine heart.

Beauty is the creator of desire's spring-  
tide,

Desire is nourished by the display of  
Beauty.

'Tis in the poet's breast that Beauty  
unveils,

'Tis from his Sinai that Beauty's beams 690  
arise.

By his look the fair is made fairer,  
Through his enchantments Nature is  
more beloved.

From his lips the nightingale hath  
learned her song,

And his rouge hath brightened the  
cheek of the rose.

## 62 SECRETS OF THE SELF VIII

'Tis his passion burns in the heart of  
695 the moth,

'Tis he that lends glowing hues to love-  
tales.

Sea and land are hidden within his  
water and clay,<sup>1</sup>

A hundred new worlds are concealed in  
his heart.

Ere tulips blossomed in his brain

There was heard no note of joy or  
700 grief.

His music breathes o'er us a wonderful  
enchantment,

His pen draws a mountain with a single  
hair.

His thoughts dwell with the moon and  
the stars,

He creates beauty in that which is ugly  
and strange.

He is a Khizr, and amidst his darkness  
705 is the Fountain of Life :<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* in his body.

<sup>2</sup> Khizr, according to the legend, discovered the Fountain of Life in the Land of Darkness.

VIII SECRETS OF THE SELF 63

All things that exist are made more  
living by his tears.

Heavily we go, like raw novices,  
Stumbling on the way to the goal.  
His nightingale hath played a tune  
And laid a plot to beguile us, 710  
That he may lead us into Life's Paradise,  
And that Life's bow may become a full  
circle.

Caravans march at the sound of his bell  
And follow the voice of his pipe ;  
But when his zephyr blows in our  
gardens, 715  
We stay loitering amongst tulips and  
roses.

His witchery makes Life develop itself  
And become self-questioning and im-  
patient.

He invites the whole world to his table ;  
He lavishes his fire as though it were  
cheap as air. 720

Woe to a people that resigns itself to  
death,

64 SECRETS OF THE SELF VIII

And whose poet turns away from the  
joy of living!

His mirror shows beauty as ugliness,  
His honey leaves a hundred stings in  
the heart.

725 His kiss robs the rose of freshness,  
He takes away from the nightingale's  
heart the joy of flying.

Thy sinews are relaxed by his opium,  
Thou payest for his song with thy  
life.

He bereaves the cypress of delight in  
its beauty,

His cold breath makes a pheasant of  
730 the male falcon.

He is a fish, and from the breast upward  
a man,

Like the Sirens in the ocean.

With his song he enchants the pilot  
And casts the ship to the bottom of  
the sea.

His melodies steal firmness from thine  
735 heart,

VIII SECRETS OF THE SELF 65

His magic persuades thee that death is  
life.

He takes from thy soul the desire of  
existence,

He extracts from thy mine the blushing  
ruby.

He dresses gain in the garb of loss,

He makes everything praiseworthy  
blameful.

740

He plunges thee in a sea of thought,

He makes thee a stranger to action.

He is sick, and by his words our  
sickness is increased :

The more his cup goes round, the more  
sick are they that quaff it.

There are no lightning-rains in his April, 745

His garden is a mirage of colour and  
perfume.

His beauty hath no dealings with Truth,

There are none but flawed pearls in his  
sea.

Slumber he deemed sweeter than  
waking :

- 750 Our fire was quenched by his breath.  
 By the chant of his nightingale the  
     heart was poisoned :  
 Under his heap of roses lurked a snake.  
 Beware of his decanter and cup !  
 Beware of his sparkling wine !
- 755 O thou whom his wine hath laid low  
 And who look'st to his glass for thy  
     rising dawn,  
 O thou whose heart hath been chilled  
     by his melodies,  
 Thou hast drunk deadly poison through  
     the ear !  
 Thy way of life is a proof of thy  
     degeneracy,  
 The strings of thine instrument are out  
 760      of tune.
- 'Tis pampered ease hath made thee so  
     wretched,  
 A disgrace to Islam throughout the  
     world.  
 One can bind thee with the vein of a  
     rose,

VIII SECRETS OF THE SELF 67

One can wound thee with a zephyr.  
Love hath been put to shame by thy  
wailing, 765

His fair picture hath been fouled by  
thy brush.

Thy ill-usage hath paled his cheek,  
Thy coldness hath taken the glow from  
his fire.

He is heartsick from thy heart-  
sicknesses,

And enfeebled by thy feeblenesses. 770

His cup is full of childish tears,  
His house is furnished with distressful  
sighs.<sup>1</sup>

He is a drunkard begging at tavern-  
doors,

Stealing glimpses of beauty from  
lattices,

Unhappy, melancholy, injured, 775

Kicked well-nigh to death by the  
warder ;

<sup>1</sup> In this passage the author assails the Persian and Urdu poetry so much in favour with his contemporaries.



68 SECRETS OF THE SELF VIII

Wasted like a reed by sorrows,  
On his lips a store of complaints against  
Heaven.

Flattery and spite are the mettle of his  
mirror,

780 Helplessness his comrade of old ;  
A miserable base-born underling  
Without worth or hope or object,  
Whose lamentations have sucked the  
marrow from thy soul  
And driven off gentle sleep from thy  
neighbours' eyes.

785 Alas for a love whose fire is extinct,  
A love that was born in the Holy  
Place and died in the house of  
idols !

Oh, if thou hast the coin of poesy in  
thy purse,

Rub it on the touchstone of Life !

Clear-seeing thought shows the way to  
action,

As the lightning-flash precedes the  
790 thunder.

It behoves thee to meditate well concerning literature,

It behoves thee to go back to the Arabs :  
Thou must needs give thine heart to  
the Salmá of Araby,<sup>1</sup>

That the morn of the Hijáz may blossom  
from the night of Kurdistan.<sup>2</sup>

Thou hast gathered roses from the  
garden of Persia

795

And seen the springtide of India and  
Iran :

<sup>1</sup> Arabic odes usually begin with a prelude in which the poet makes mention of his beloved ; and her name is often Salmá. Here "the Salmá of Araby" refers to the Koran and the ideals for which it stands.

<sup>2</sup> It is related that an ignorant Kurd came to some students and besought them to instruct him in the mysteries of Súfism. They told him that he must fasten a rope to the roof of his house, then tie the loose end to his feet and suspend himself, head downwards ; and that he must remain in this posture as long as possible, reciting continually some words of gibberish which they taught him. The poor man did not perceive that he was being mocked. He followed their instructions and passed the whole night repeating the words given him. God rewarded his faith and sincerity by granting him illumination, so that he became a saint and could discourse learnedly on the most abstruse matters of mystical theology. Afterwards he used to say, "In the evening I was a Kurd, but the next morning I was an Arab."

## 70 SECRETS OF THE SELF VIII

Now taste a little of the heat of the  
desert,

Drink the old wine of the date !

Lay thine head for once on its hot  
breast,

Yield thy body awhile to its scorching  
wind !

800

For a long time thou hast turned about  
on a bed of silk :

Now accustom thyself to rough cotton !  
For generations thou hast danced on  
tulips

And bathed thy cheek in dew, like  
the rose :

805

Now throw thyself on the burning sand  
And plunge into the fountain of  
Zemzem !

How long wilt thou fain lament like  
the nightingale ?

How long make thine abode in gardens ?  
O thou whose auspicious snare would  
do honour to the Phoenix,

810

Build a nest on the high mountains,

**VIII SECRETS OF THE SELF 71**

A nest embosomed in lightning and  
thunder,  
Loftier than eagle's eyrie,  
That thou mayst be fit for Life's battle,  
That thy body and soul may burn in  
Life's fire !

## IX

*Showing that the education of the Self  
has three stages: Obedience, Self-control,  
and Divine Vicegerency.*

### 1. OBEDIENCE

815 SERVICE and toil are traits of the camel,  
Patience and perseverance are ways of  
the camel.

Noiselessly he steps along the sandy  
track,

He is the ship of those who voyage in  
the desert.

Every thicket knows the print of his  
foot:

He eats seldom, sleeps little, and is  
820 inured to toil.

IX SECRETS OF THE SELF 73

He carries rider, baggage, and litter ;  
He trots on and on to the journey's end,  
Rejoicing in his speed,  
More patient in travel than his rider.

Thou, too, do not refuse the burden of  
Duty :

825

So wilt thou enjoy the best dwelling-  
place, which is with God.

Endeavour to obey, O heedless one !

Liberty is the fruit of compulsion.

By obedience the man of no worth is  
made worthy ;

By disobedience his fire is turned to  
ashes.

830

Whoso would master the sun and stars,  
Let him make himself a prisoner of  
Law !

The wind is enthralled by the fragrant  
rose ;

The perfume is confined in the navel of  
the musk-deer.

The star moves towards its goal

835

With head bowed in surrender to a law.

74 SECRETS OF THE SELF ix

The grass springs up in obedience to  
the law of growth :

When it abandons that, it is trodden  
underfoot.

To burn unceasingly is the law of the  
tulip,

840 And so the blood leaps in its veins.

Drops of water become a sea by the  
law of union,

And grains of sand become a Sahara.

Since Law makes everything strong  
within,

Why dost thou neglect this source of  
strength ?

O thou that art emancipated from the  
845 old Custom,<sup>1</sup>

Adorn thy feet once more with the  
same fine silver chain !

Do not complain of the hardness of the  
Law,

Do not transgress the statutes of  
Mohammed !

<sup>1</sup> The religious law of Islam.

2. SELF-CONTROL.

Thy soul cares only for itself, like the  
camel :

It is self-conceited, self-governed, and  
self-willed. 850

Be a man, get its halter into thine  
hand,

That thou mayst become a pearl albeit  
thou art a potter's vessel.

He that does not command himself  
Becomes a receiver of commands from  
others.

When they moulded thee of clay, 855  
Love and fear were mingled in thy  
making :

Fear of this world and of the world to  
come, fear of death,

Fear of all the pains of earth and  
heaven ;

Love of riches and power, love of  
country,

Love of self and kindred and wife. 860



76 SECRETS OF THE SELF IX

'The mixing of clay with water nourishes  
the body,<sup>1</sup>

But he that is drowned in sin dies an  
evil death.

So long as thou hold'st the staff of  
"There is no God but He,"<sup>2</sup>

Thou wilt break every spell of fear.

One to whom God is as the soul in his  
865 body,

His neck is not bowed before vanity.

Fear finds no way into his bosom,

His heart is afraid of none but Allah.

Whoso dwells in the Moslem Faith

Is free from the bonds of wife and  
870 child.

He withdraws his gaze from all except  
God

And lays the knife to the throat of his  
son.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* water is an indispensable element in the life of the body.

<sup>2</sup> The first article of the Mohammedan creed.

<sup>3</sup> Like Abraham when he was about to sacrifice Isaac or (as Moslems generally believe) Ishmael.

IX SECRETS OF THE SELF 77

Though single, he is like a host in onset :  
Life is cheaper in his eyes than wind.

The profession of Faith is the shell, but  
prayer is the pearl : 875

The Moslem's heart deems prayer a  
lesser pilgrimage.<sup>1</sup>

In the Moslem's hand prayer is like a  
dagger

Killing sin and frowardness and wrong.  
Fasting makes an assault upon hunger  
and thirst

And breaches the citadel of sensuality. 880

The pilgrimage enlightens the minds of  
the Faithful :

It teaches separation from one's home  
and destroys attachment to one's  
native land ;

It is an act of devotion in which all feel  
themselves to be one,

It binds together the leaves of the book  
of religion.

<sup>1</sup> The lesser pilgrimage (*umra*) is not obligatory like the greater pilgrimage (*hajj*).

## 78 SECRETS OF THE SELF IX

Almsgiving causes love of riches to pass  
885 away

And makes equality familiar ;

It fortifies the heart with righteousness,<sup>1</sup>

It increases wealth and diminishes  
fondness for wealth.

All this is a means of strengthening  
thee :

Thou art impregnable, if thy Islam be  
890 strong.

Draw might from the litany "O  
Almighty One !"

That thou mayst ride the camel of thy  
body.<sup>2</sup>

### 3. DIVINE VICEGERENCY<sup>3</sup>

If thou canst rule thy camel, thou wilt  
rule the world

<sup>1</sup> The original quotes part of a verse in the Koran (ch. 3, v. 86), where it is said, "Ye shall never attain unto righteousness until ye give in alms of that which ye love."

<sup>2</sup> *I.e.* overcome the lusts of the flesh.

<sup>3</sup> Here Iqbal interprets in his own way the Súfí doctrine of the *Insán al-kámil* or Perfect Man, which

IX SECRETS OF THE SELF 79

And wear on thine head the crown of  
Solomon.

'Thou wilt be the glory of the world  
whilst the world lasts, 895

And thou wilt reign in the kingdom  
incorruptible.

'Tis sweet to be God's vicegerent in the  
world

And exercise sway over the elements.

God's vicegerent is as the soul of the  
universe,

His being is the shadow of the Greatest  
Name. 900

He knows the mysteries of part and  
whole,

He executes the command of Allah in  
the world.

When he pitches his tent in the wide  
world,

---

teaches that every man is potentially a microcosm, and that when he has become spiritually perfect, all the Divine attributes are displayed by him, so that as saint or prophet he is the God-man, the representative and vicegerent of God on earth.

80 SECRETS OF THE SELF ix

He rolls up this ancient carpet.<sup>1</sup>

His genius abounds with life and desires

905 to manifest itself :

He will bring another world into existence.

A hundred worlds like this world of parts and wholes

Spring up, like roses, from the seed of his imagination.

He makes every raw nature ripe,

He puts the idols out of the sanctuary.

910

Heart-strings give forth music at his touch,

He wakes and sleeps for God alone.

He teaches age the melody of youth

And endows everything with the radiance of youth.

To the human race he brings both a glad message and a warning,

915

He comes both as a soldier and as a marshal and prince.

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* his appearance marks the end of an epoch.

IX SECRETS OF THE SELF 81

He is the final cause of "God taught  
Adam the names of all things,"<sup>1</sup>

He is the inmost sense of "Glory to  
Him that transported His servant  
by night."<sup>2</sup>

His white hand is strengthened by the  
staff,<sup>3</sup>

His knowledge is twinned with the  
power of a perfect man. 920

When that bold cavalier seizes the  
reins,

The steed of Time gallops faster.

His awful mien makes the Red Sea dry,  
He leads Israel out of Egypt.

At his cry, "Arise," the dead spirits 925  
Rise in their bodily tomb, like pines in  
the field.

His person is an atonement for all the  
world,

<sup>1</sup> Koran, ch. 2, v. 29. The Ideal Man is the final cause of creation.

<sup>2</sup> Koran, ch. 17, v. 1, referring to the Ascension of the Prophet.

<sup>3</sup> For the white hand (of Moses) cf. Koran, ch. 7, v. 105, ch. 26, v. 32, and Exodus, ch. 4, v. 6.

## 82 SECRETS OF THE SELF IX

By his grandeur the world is saved.<sup>1</sup>

His protecting shadow makes the mote  
familiar with the sun,

His rich substance makes precious all  
930 that exists.

He bestows life by miraculous works,

He founds a new system to work by.

Splendid visions rise from the print of  
his foot,

Many a Moses is entranced by his  
Sinai.

935 He gives a new explanation of Life,

A new interpretation of this dream.

His hidden being is Life's mystery,

The unheard music of Life's harp.

Nature travails in blood for genera-  
tions

To compose the harmony of his

940 personality.

When our handful of earth has reached  
the zenith,

<sup>1</sup> These four lines may allude to Jesus, regarded as a type of the Perfect Man.

IX SECRETS OF THE SELF 83

That champion will come forth from  
this dust !

There sleeps amidst the ashes of To-day  
The flame of a world - consuming  
morrow.

Our bud enfolds a garden of roses, 945  
Our eyes are bright with to-morrow's  
dawn.

Appear, O rider of Destiny !  
Appear, O light of the dark realm of  
Change !

Illumine the scene of existence,  
Dwell in the blackness of our eyes ! 950

Silence the noise of the nations,  
Imparadise our ears with thy music !  
Arise and tune the harp of brother-  
hood,

Give us back the cup of the wine of  
love !

Bring once more days of peace to the  
world, 955

Give a message of peace to them that  
seek battle !



84 SECRETS OF THE SELF IX

Mankind are the cornfield and thou the  
harvest,

Thou art the goal of Life's caravan.

The leaves are scattered by Autumn's  
fury :

Oh, do thou pass over our gardens  
as the Spring !

Receive from our downcast brows

The homage of little children and of  
young men and old !

When thou art there, we will lift up  
our heads,

Content to suffer the burning fire of  
this world.

## X

*Setting forth the inner meanings of the  
names of Ali.*

ALI is the first Moslem and the King  
of men, 965  
In Love's eyes Ali is the treasure of  
the Faith.  
Devotion to his family inspires me  
with life  
So that I am as a shining pearl.  
Like the narcissus, I am enraptured  
with gazing ;  
Like perfume, I am straying through  
his pleasure-garden. 970  
If holy water gushes from my earth,  
he is the source ;

## 86 SECRETS OF THE SELF x

If wine pours from my grapes, he is  
the cause.

I am dust, but his sun hath made me  
as a mirror :

Song can be seen in my breast.

From Ali's face the Prophet drew a  
975 fair omen,

By his majesty the true religion is  
glorified.

His commandments are the strength of  
Islam :

All things pay allegiance to his House.

The Apostle of God gave him the  
name Bú Turáb ;

God in the Koran called him "the  
980 Hand of Allah."

Every one that is acquainted with  
Life's mysteries

Knows what is the inner meaning of  
the names of Ali.

The dark clay, whose name is the body—

Our reason is ever bemoaning its  
iniquity.

On account of it our sky-reaching  
thought plods o'er the earth ; 985

It makes our eyes blind and our ears  
deaf.

It hath in its hand a two-edged sword  
of lust :

Travellers' hearts are broken by this  
brigand.

Ali, the Lion of God, subdued the  
body's clay

And transmuted this dark earth to gold. 990

Murtazá, by whose sword the splendour  
of Truth was revealed,

Is named Bú Turáb from his conquest  
of the body.<sup>1</sup>

Man wins territory by prowess in battle,  
But his brightest jewel is mastery of  
himself.

Whosoever in the world becomes a

• Bú Turáb

Turns back the sun from the west ;<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Murtazá, "he whom with God is pleased," is a name of Ali. Bú Turáb means literally "father of earth."

<sup>2</sup> A miracle of the Prophet.

## 88 SECRETS OF THE SELF . x

Whosoever saddles tightly the steed of  
the body

Sits like the bezel on the seal of  
sovereignty :

Here the might of Khaibar is under  
his feet,<sup>1</sup>

And hereafter his hand will distribute  
1000 the water of Kauthar.<sup>2</sup>

Through self-knowledge he acts as  
God's Hand,

And in virtue of being God's Hand he  
reigns over all.

His person is the gate of the city of  
the sciences :

Arabia, China, and Greece are subject  
to him.

If thou wouldst drink clear wine from  
1005 thine own grapes,

Thou must needs wield authority over  
thine own earth.

<sup>1</sup> The fortress of Khaibar, a village in the Hijáz, was captured by the Moslems in A.D. 628. Ali performed great feats of valour on this occasion.

<sup>2</sup> A river of Paradise.

**To become earth is the creed of a moth;  
Be a conqueror of earth; that alone is  
worthy of a man.**

Thou art soft as a rose.    Become hard  
as a stone,

That thou mayst be the foundation of  
the wall of the garden ! 1010

**Build thy clay into a Man,  
Build thy Man into a World!**

If thou art unfit to be either a wall or  
a door,

Some one else will make bricks of  
thine earth.

O thou who complainest of the cruelty  
of Heaven, 1015

Thou whose glass cries out against the  
injustice of the stone,

How long this wailing and crying and lamentation?

How long this perpetual beating of  
thy breast?

The pith of Life is contained in action,  
To delight in creation is the law of Life. 1020

Arise and create a new world !

Wrap thyself in flames, be an  
Abraham !<sup>1</sup>

To comply with this ill-starred world  
Is to fling away thy buckler on the  
field of battle.

The man of strong character who is  
1025 master of himself

Will find Fortune complaisant.

If the world does not comply with his  
humour,

He will try the hazard of war with  
Heaven ;

He will dig up the foundations of the  
universe

1030 And cast its atoms into a new mould.

He will subvert the course of Time

And wreck the azure firmament.

By his own strength he will produce

A new world which will do his pleasure.

If one cannot live in the world as  
1035 beseems a man,

<sup>1</sup> See note on l. 213.

x SECRETS OF THE SELF 91

It is true life to give up one's soul.

He that hath sound intelligence

Will prove his strength by great  
enterprises.

'Tis sweet to use love in hard tasks

And, like Abraham, to gather roses  
from flames.<sup>1</sup>

1040

The potentialities of men of action

Are displayed in willing acceptance of  
what is difficult.

Mean spirits have no weapon but spite,

This is their one rule of life.

But Life is power made manifest,

1045

And its mainspring is the desire for  
victory.

Mercy out of season is a coldness of

Life's blood,

A break in the rhythm of Life's music.

Whoever is sunk in the depths of  
ignominy

Calls his weakness contentment.

1050

<sup>1</sup> The burning pyre on which Abraham was thrown  
lost its heat and was transformed into a rose-garden.



## 92 SECRETS OF THE SELF x

Weakness is the plunderer of Life,  
Its womb is teeming with fears and lies.  
Its soul is empty of virtues,  
Its milk is a fattening for vices.

1055 O man of sound judgement, beware !  
This spoiler is lurking in ambush.  
Be not his dupe, if thou art wise :  
Chameleon-like, he changes colour every  
moment.

Even by keen observers his form is not  
discerned :

1060 Veils are thrown over his face.  
Now he is muffled in pity and gentle-  
ness,  
Now he wears the cloak of humility.  
Sometimes he is disguised as a victim  
of oppression,  
Sometimes as one whose sins are to be  
excused.

He appears in the shape of self-  
1065 indulgence  
And robs the strong man's heart of  
courage.

x    SECRETS OF THE SELF    93

Strength is the twin of Truth ;  
If thou knowest thyself, strength is the  
    Truth-revealing glass.

Life is the seed, and power the crop :  
Power explains the mystery of truth  
    and falsehood. 1070

The false claimant, if he be possessed  
    of power,

Needs no argument for his claim.

Falsehood derives from power the  
    authority of truth,

And by falsifying truth deems itself  
    true.

Its creative word transforms poison  
    into nectar ; 1075

It says to Good, "Thou art bad," and  
    Good becomes Evil.

O thou that art heedless of the trust  
    committed to thee,

Esteem thyself superior to both worlds!<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The "trust" which God offered to Man and which Man accepted, after it had been refused by Heaven and Earth (Koran, ch. 33, v. 72), is the divine vicegerency, *i.e.* the duty of displaying the divine attributes.

Gain knowledge of Life's mysteries !

1080 Be a tyrant ! Ignore all except God !

O man of understanding, open thine  
eyes, ears, and lips !<sup>1</sup>

If then thou seest not the Way of  
Truth, laugh at me !

<sup>1</sup> A parody of the verse in the *Masnavi* quoted above.  
See l. 603,

## XI

*Story of a young man of Merv who came to the saint Ali Hujwírí—God have mercy on him!—and complained that he was oppressed by his enemies.*

THE saint of Hujwír was venerated by  
the peoples,  
And Pír-i Sanjar visited his tomb as a  
pilgrim.<sup>1</sup>

With ease he broke down the mountain-  
barriers

1085

And sowed the seed of Islam in India.  
The age of Omar was restored by his  
. . . godliness,

<sup>1</sup> Hujwírí, author of the oldest Persian treatise on Súfism, was a native of Ghazna in Afghanistan. He died at Lahore about A.D. 1072. Pír-i Sanjar is the renowned saint, Mu'ínuddín, head of the Chishtí order of dervishes, who died in A.D. 1235 at Ajmír.

The fame of the Truth was exalted by  
his words.

He was a guardian of the honour of  
the Koran,

The house of Falsehood fell in ruins at  
1090 his gaze.

The dust of the Panjáb was brought to  
life by his breath,

Our dawn was made splendid by his  
sun.

He was a lover, and withal a courier of  
Love :

The secrets of Love shone forth from  
his brow.

1095 I will tell a story of his perfection  
And enclose a whole rose-bed in a  
single bud.

A young man, cypress-tall,  
Came from the town of Merv to Lahore.  
He went to see the venerable saint,

1100 That the sun might dispel his darkness.  
“ I am hemmed in,” he said, “ by foes ;  
I am as a glass in the midst of stones.

Do thou teach me, O sire of heavenly  
rank,

How to lead my life amongst enemies !”

The wise Director, in whose nature 1105

Love had allied mercy with wrath,

Answered : “Thou art unread in Life’s  
lore,

Careless of its end and its beginning.

Be without fear of others !

‘Thou art a sleeping force : awake ! 1110

When the stone was anxious on account  
of the glass,

It became glass and got into the way  
of breaking.

If the traveller thinks himself weak,

He delivers his soul unto the brigand.

How long wilt thou regard thyself as  
water and clay ? 1115

Create from thy clay a flaming Sinai !

Why be angry with mighty men ?

Why complain of enemies ?

I will declare the truth : thine enemy  
is thy friend ;

98 SECRETS OF THE SELF xi

His existence crowns thee with glory.

Whosoever knows the states of the Self  
Considers a powerful enemy to be a  
blessing from God.

'To the seed of Man the enemy is as a  
rain-cloud :

He awakens its potentialities.

1125 If thy spirit be strong, the stones in  
thy way are as water :

What recks the torrent of the ups and  
downs of the road ?

'The sword of resolution is whetted by  
the stones in the way

And put to proof by traversing stage  
after stage.

What is the use of eating and sleeping  
like a beast ?

1130 What is the use of being, unless thou  
have strength in thyself ?

When thou mak'st thyself strong with  
Self,

'Thou wilt destroy the world at thy  
pleasure.

If thou wouldst pass away, become free  
of Self;

If thou wouldst live, become full of  
Self!<sup>1</sup>

What is death? To become oblivious  
to Self. 1135

Why imagine that it is the parting of  
soul and body?

Abide in Self, like Joseph!

Advance from captivity to empire!

Think of Self and be a man of action!

Be a man of God, bear mysteries  
within!" 1140

I will explain the matter by means of  
stories,

I will open the bud by the power of  
my breath.

"'Tis better that a lovers' secret

Should be told by the lips of others."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These lines correct the Súfî doctrine that by means of passing away from individuality the mystic attains to everlasting life in God.

<sup>2</sup> *I.e.* allegorically. This verse occurs in the *Masnawî*.



## XII

### *Story of the bird that was faint with thirst:*

1145 A BIRD was faint with thirst,  
The breath in his body was heaving  
like waves of smoke.  
He saw a diamond in the garden :  
Thirst created a vision of water.  
Deceived by the sunbright stone  
The foolish bird fancied that it was  
1150 water.  
He got no moisture from the gem :  
He pecked it with his beak, but it 'did  
not wet his palate.  
“O thrall of vain desire,” said the  
diamond,

XII SECRETS OF THE SELF 101

“Thou hast sharpened thy greedy beak  
on me ;

But I am not a dewdrop, I give no  
drink, 1155

I do not live for the sake of others.

Wouldst thou hurt me ? Thou art  
mad !

A life that reveals the Self is strange  
to thee.

My water will shiver the beaks of birds  
And break the jewel of man's life.”<sup>1</sup> 1160

The bird won not his heart's wish from  
the diamond

And turned away from the sparkling  
stone.

Disappointment swelled in his breast,

The song in his throat became a wail.

Upon a rose-twigg a drop of dew 1165

Gleamed like the tear in a nightingale's  
eye :

All its glitter was owing to the sun,

It was trembling in fear of the sun—

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* if he swallow a diamond, he will die.

## 102 SECRETS OF THE SELF xii

A restless sky-born star  
That had stopped for a moment, from  
1170        desire to be seen ;  
Oft deceived by bud and flower,  
It had gained nothing from Life.  
There it hung, ready to drop,  
Like a tear on the eyelashes of a lover  
              who hath lost his heart.  
The sorely distressed bird' hopped under  
1175        the rose-bush,  
The dewdrop trickled into his mouth.  
O thou that wouldst deliver thy soul  
              from enemies,  
I ask thee—" Art thou a drop of water  
              or a gem ?"  
When the bird melted in the fire of  
              thirst,  
1180 It appropriated the life of another.  
The drop was not solid and gem-like ;  
The diamond had a being, the drop  
              had none.  
Never for an instant neglect Self-  
              preservation :

**xii SECRETS OF THE SELF 103**

**Be a diamond, not a dewdrop !**

**Be massive in nature, like mountains,      1185**

**And bear on thy crest a hundred clouds  
    laden with floods of rain !**

**Save thyself by affirmation of Self,**

**Compress thy quicksilver into silver  
    ore !**

**Produce a melody from the string of  
    Self,**

**Make manifest the secrets of Self !      1190**

### XIII

#### *Story of the diamond and the coal.*

Now I will open one more gate of  
Truth,  
I will tell thee another tale.  
The coal in the mine said to the  
diamond,  
“O thou entrusted with splendours  
everlasting,  
We are comrades, and our being is  
1195 one ;  
The source of our existence is the  
same,  
Yet while I die here in the anguish of  
worthlessness,  
Thou art set on the crowns of emperors.

**xiii SECRETS OF THE SELF 105**

My stuff is so vile that I am valued less  
than earth,

Whereas the mirror's heart is rent by  
thy beauty. 1200

My darkness illumines the chafing-dish,  
Then my substance is incinerated at  
last.

Every one puts the sole of his foot on  
my head

And covers my stock of existence with  
ashes.

My fate must needs be deplored ; 1205

Dost thou know what is the gist of my  
being ?

Thou art a condensed wavelet of  
smoke,

Endowed with the properties of a single  
spark ;

Both in feature and nature thou art  
star-like,

Splendours rise from every side of thee. 1210

Now thou becom'st the light of a  
monarch's eye,

Now thou adornest the haft of a  
dagger."

"O sagacious friend!" said the diamond,  
"Dark earth, when hardened, becomes  
in dignity as a bezel.

Having been at strife with its environ-  
1215       ment,

It is ripened by the struggle and grows  
hard like a stone.

'Tis this ripeness that has endowed my  
form with light

And filled my bosom with radiance.

Because thy being is immature, thou  
hast become abased ;

Because thy body is soft, thou art  
1220       burnt.

Be void of fear, grief, and anxiety ;

Be hard as a stone, be a diamond !

Whosoever strives hard and grips tight,  
The two worlds are illumined by  
him.

1225       A little earth is the origin of the Black  
Stone

**XIII SECRETS OF THE SELF 107**

Which puts forth its head in the Ka'ba :  
Its rank is higher than Sinai,  
It is kissed by the swarthy and the fair.  
In solidity consists the glory of Life ;  
Weakness is worthlessness and im-  
maturity."



## XIV

*Story of the Sheikh and the Brahmin,  
followed by a conversation between  
Ganges and Himalaya to the effect that  
the continuation of social life depends  
on firm attachment to the characteristic  
traditions of the community.*

AT Benares lived a venerable Brahmin,  
Whose head was deep in the ocean of  
Being and Not-being.

He had a large knowledge of philosophy  
But was well-disposed to the seekers  
after God.

His mind was eager to explore new  
1235 problems,  
His intellect moved on a level with the  
Pleiades ;

xiv SECRETS OF THE SELF 109

His nest was as high as that of the  
Anká ;<sup>1</sup>

Sun and moon were cast, like rue, on  
the flame of his thought.<sup>2</sup>

For a long time he laboured and  
sweated,

But philosophy brought no wine to his  
cup.

1240

Although he set many a snare in the  
gardens of learning,

His snares never caught a glimpse of  
the Ideal bird ;

And notwithstanding that the nails of his  
thought were dabbled with blood,

The knot of Being and Not-being  
remained untied.

The sighs on his lips bore witness to  
his despair,

1245

His countenance told tales of his dis-  
• • traction.

One day he visited an excellent Sheikh,

<sup>1</sup> A mysterious bird, of which nothing is known except  
its name.

<sup>2</sup> Rue-seed is burned for the purpose of fumigation.

A man who had in his breast a heart  
of gold.

The Sheikh laid the seal of silence on  
his lips

While he lent his ear to the Sage's  
1250 discourse.

Then he said: "O wanderer in the  
lofty sky,

Pledge thyself to be true, for a little,  
to the earth!

Thou hast lost thy way in wildernesses  
of speculation,

Thy fearless thought hath passed  
beyond Heaven.

Be reconciled with earth, O sky-  
1255 traveller!

Do not wander in quest of the essence  
of the stars!

I do not bid thee abandon thine idols.

Art thou an unbeliever? Then be  
worthy of the badge of unbelief!<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "The badge of unbelief": here the original has *zunnir* (ζωνάριον), i.e. the sacred thread worn by Zoroastrians and other non-Moslems.

O inheritor of ancient culture,  
 Turn not thy back on the path thy  
     fathers trod ! 1260

If a people's life is derived from unity,  
 Unbelief too is a source of unity.

Thou that art not even a perfect infidel  
 Art unfit to worship at the shrine of  
     the spirit.

We both are far astray from the road  
     of devotion : 1265

Thou art far from Ázar, and I from  
     Abraham.<sup>1</sup>

Our Majnún hath not fallen into  
     melancholy for his Lailá's sake :

He hath not become perfect in the  
     madness of love.

When the lamp of Self expires,  
 What is the use of heaven-surveying  
     imagination ?" 1270

• •

Once on a time, laying hold of the skirt  
     of the mountain,

<sup>1</sup> Ázar, the father of Abraham, was an idolater.

Ganges said to Himalaya :

“O thou mantled in snow since the  
morn of creation,

Thou whose form is girdled with  
streams,

God made thee a partner in the secrets  
1275 of heaven,

But deprived thy foot of graceful  
gait.

He took away from thee the power to  
walk :

What avails this sublimity and stateli-  
ness ?

Life springs from perpetual movement :  
Motion constitutes the wave's whole  
1280 existence.”

When the mountain heard this taunt  
from the river,

He puffed angrily like a sea of fire,

And answered : “Thy wide waters are  
my looking-glass ;

Within my bosom are a hundred rivers  
like thee.

**xiv SECRETS OF THE SELF 113**

This graceful gait of thine is an instrument of death : 1285

Whoso goeth from Self is meet to die.  
Thou hast no knowledge of thine own case,

Thou exuldest in thy misfortune : thou art a fool !

O born of the womb of the revolving sphere, -

A fallen-in bank is better than thou ! 1290

Thou hast made thine existence an offering to the ocean,

Thou hast thrown the rich purse of thy life to the highwayman.

Be self-contained like the rose in the garden,

Do not go to the florist in order to smell sweet !

To live is to grow in thyself 1295

And gather roses from thine own flower-bed.

Ages have gone by and my foot is fast in earth :

114 SECRETS OF THE SELF xiv

‘  
Dost thou fancy that I am far from  
my goal?

My being grew and reached the sky,  
The Pleiads sank to rest under my  
1300 skirts;

Thy being vanishes in the ocean,  
But on my crest the stars bow their  
heads.

Mine eye sees the mysteries of heaven,  
Mine ear is familiar with angels’ wings.  
Since I glowed with the heat of un-  
1305 ceasing toil,

I amassed rubies, diamonds, and other  
gems.

I am stone within, and in the stone is  
fire:

Water cannot pass over my fire!”

Art thou a drop of water? Do not  
break at thine own feet,

But endeavour to surge and wrestle  
1310 with the sea.

Desire the water of a jewel, become a  
jewel!

**xiv SECRETS OF THE SELF 115**

Be an ear-drop, adorn a beauty !

Oh, expand thyself ! Move swiftly !

Be a cloud that shoots lightning and  
sheds a flood of rain !

Let the ocean sue for thy storms as a  
beggar,

1315

Let it complain of the straitness of thy  
skirts !

Let it deem itself less than a wave

And glide along at thy feet !



## XV

*Showing that the purpose of the Moslem's life is to exalt the Word of Allah, and that the Jihád (war against unbelievers), if it be prompted by land-hunger, is unlawful in the religion of Islam.*

IMBUE thine heart with the tincture  
of Allah,

1320 Give honour and glory to Love !

The Moslem's nature prevails by means  
of love :

The Moslem, if he be not loving, is an  
infidel.

Upon God depends his seeing and not-  
seeing,

His eating, drinking, and sleeping.

In his will that which God wills be-  
comes lost—

1325

“How shall a man believe this saying?”<sup>1</sup>  
He encamps in the field of “There is  
no god but Allah”;

In the world he is a witness against  
mankind.

His high estate is attested by the  
Prophet that was sent to men and  
Jinn—

By the most truthful of witnesses. 1330

Leave words and seek that spiritual  
state,

Shed the light of God o’er the darkness  
of works!

Albeit clad in kingly robe, live as a  
dervish,

Live wakeful and meditating on God!

Whatever thou doest, let it be thine

• • aim therein to draw nigh to God, 1335

That His glory may be made manifest  
by thee.

<sup>1</sup> See Introduction, p. xix, note 1.

'Peace becomes an evil, if its object be  
aught else ;

War is good if its object is God.

If God be not exalted by our swords,

1340 War dishonours the people.

The holy Sheikh Miyán Mír Walí,<sup>1</sup>

By the light of whose soul every hidden  
thing was revealed—

His feet were firmly planted on the  
path of Mohammed,

He was a flute for the impassioned  
music of love.

1345 His tomb keeps our city safe from harm  
And causes the beams of true religion  
to shine on us.

Heaven stooped its brow to his threshold,  
The Emperor of India was one of his  
disciples.<sup>2</sup>

Now, this monarch had sown the seed  
of ambition in his heart

1350 And was resolved on conquest.

<sup>1</sup> A celebrated Moslem saint, who died at Lahore in  
A.D. 1635.

<sup>2</sup> Aurangzib.

The flames of vain desire were alight  
in him,

He was teaching his sword to ask, "Is  
there any more?"<sup>1</sup>

In the Deccan was a great noise of war,  
His army stood on the battlefield.

He went to the Sheikh of heaven-high  
dignity

1355

That he might receive his blessing :

The Moslem turns from this world to  
God

And strengthens policy with prayer.

The Sheikh made no answer to the  
Emperor's speech,

The assembly of dervishes was all ears, 1360

Until a disciple, in his hand a silver  
coin,

Opened his lips and broke the silence,

Saying, "Accept this poor offering

• • from me,

O guide of them that have lost the  
way to God !

<sup>1</sup> Koran, ch. 50, v. 29.

120 SECRETS OF THE SELF xv

My limbs were bathed in sweat of  
1365 labour /

Before I put away a dirhem in my  
skirt."

The Sheikh said: "This money ought  
to be given to our Sultan,  
Who is a beggar wearing the raiment  
of a king.

Though he holds sway over sun, moon,  
and stars,

Our Emperor is the most penniless of  
1370 mankind.

His eye is fixed on the table of strangers,  
The fire of his hunger hath consumed  
a whole world.

His sword is followed by famine and  
plague,

His culture lays a wide land waste.

The folk are crying out because of his  
1375 indigence,

His empty-headedness, and his oppres-  
sion of the weak.

His power is an enemy to all:

Humankind are the caravan and he the  
brigand.

In his self-delusion and ignorance  
He calls pillage by the name of empire. 1380  
Both the royal troops and those of the  
enemy

Are cloven in twain by the sword of  
his hunger.

The beggar's hunger consumes his own  
soul,

But the sultan's hunger destroys state  
and religion.

Whoso shall draw the sword for any-  
thing except Allah, 1385

His sword is sheathed in his own  
breast."

## XVI

*Precepts written for the Moslems of India by Mír Naját Nakshband, who is generally known as Bábá ʾ*

O THOU that hast grown from earth,  
like a rose,  
Thou too art born of the womb of  
Self.

Do not abandon Self! Persist therein!  
Be a drop of water and drink up the  
1390 ocean!

Glowing with the light of Self as thou  
art,  
Make Self strong, and thou wilt  
endure.

<sup>1</sup> This appears to be a pseudonym assumed by the author.

**xvi SECRETS OF THE SELF 123**

Thou gett'st profit from this trade,  
Thou gain'st riches by preserving this  
commodity.

Thou hast being, and art thou afraid of  
not-being? 1395

O foolish one, thy understanding is at  
fault.

Since I am acquainted with the  
harmony of Life,

I will tell thee what is the secret of  
Life—

To sink into thyself like the pearl,  
Then to emerge from thine inward  
solitude; 1400

To collect sparks beneath the ashes,  
And become a flame and dazzle men's  
eyes.

Go, burn the house of forty years'  
tribulation,

Move round thyself! Be a circling  
flame!

What is Life but to be freed from  
moving round others 1405



And to regard thyself as the Holy  
Temple?

Beat thy wings and escape from the  
attraction of Earth;

Like birds, be safe from falling.

Unless thou art a bird, thou wilt do  
wisely

Not to build thy nest on the top of a  
1410 cave.

O thou that seekest to acquire know-  
ledge,

I say o'er to thee the message of the  
Sage of Rûm:<sup>1</sup>

“Knowledge, if it lie on thy skin, is a  
snake;

Knowledge, if thou take it to heart, is  
a friend.”

Hast thou heard how the Master of  
1415 Rûm

Gave lectures on philosophy at  
Aleppo?—

Fast in the bonds of intellectual proofs,

<sup>1</sup> Jaláluddín Rûmí.

xvi SECRETS OF THE SELF 125

Drifting o'er the dark and stormy sea  
of understanding ;  
A Moses unillumined by Love's Sinai,  
Ignorant of Love and of Love's passion. 1420  
He discoursed on Scepticism and  
Neoplatonism,  
And strung many a brilliant pearl of  
metaphysic.  
He unravelled the problems of the  
Peripatetics,  
The light of his thought made clear  
whatever was obscure.  
Heaps of books lay around and in front  
of him, 1425  
And on his lips was the key to all their  
mysteries.  
Shams-i Tabríz, directed by Kamál,<sup>1</sup>  
Sought his way to the college of  
Jaláluddín Rúmí  
And cried out, "What is all this noise  
and babble ?

<sup>1</sup> Báábá Kamáluddín Jundí. For Shams-i Tabríz and his relation to Jaláluddín Rúmí see my *Selected Poems from the Diváni Shamsi Tabríz* (Cambridge, 1898).

What are all these syllogisms and  
 1430 judgements and demonstrations?"

"Peace, O fool!" exclaimed the  
 Maulavi,

"Do not laugh at the doctrines of the  
 sages.

Get thee out of my college!

'This is argument and discussion: what  
 hast thou to do with it?

My discourse is beyond thy under-  
 1435 standing,

It will not brighten the glass of thy  
 perception."

'These words increased the anger of  
 Shams-i Tabríz

And caused a fire to burst forth from  
 his soul.

The lightning of his look fell on the  
 earth,

And the glow of his breath made the  
 1440 dust spring into flames.

The spiritual fire burned the intellectual  
 stack

And clean consumed the book of  
philosophy.

The Maulavi, being a stranger to Love's  
miracles

And unversed in Love's harmonies,  
Cried, "How didst thou kindle this  
fire,

1445

Which hath burned the books of the  
philosophers?"

The Sheikh answered, "O unbelieving  
Moslem,

This is vision and ecstasy: what hast  
thou to do with it?

My state is beyond thy thought,  
My flame is the Alchemist's elixir."

1450

'Thou hast drawn thy substance from  
the snow of philosophy,

The cloud of thy thought sheds nothing  
but hailstones.

Kindle a fire in thy rubble,  
Foster a flame in thy earth!

'The Moslem's knowledge is perfected  
by spiritual fervour,

1455

'The meaning of Islam is *Renounce*  
*what shall pass away.*

When Abraham escaped from the  
bondage of "that which sets,"<sup>1</sup>

He sat unhurt in the midst of flames.<sup>2</sup>

Thou hast cast knowledge of God  
behind thee

And squandered thy religion for the  
1460       sake of a loaf.

Thou art hot in pursuit of antimony,

Thou art unaware of the blackness of  
thine own eye.

Seek the Fountain of Life from the  
sword's edge,

And the River of Paradise from the  
dragon's mouth,

Demand the Black Stone from the  
1465       door of the house of idols,

And the musk-deer's bladder from a  
mad dog,

<sup>1</sup> Abraham refused to worship the sun, moon, and stars, saying, "I love not them that set" (Koran, ch. 6, v. 76).

<sup>2</sup> See p. 91, note.

**xvi SECRETS OF 'THE SELF 129**

But do not seek the glow of Love from  
the knowledge of to-day,

Do not seek the nature of 'Truth from  
this infidel's cup !

Long have I been running to and fro,  
Learning the secrets of the New  
Knowledge :

1470

Its gardeners have put me to the  
trial

And have made me intimate with their  
roses.

Roses ! Tulips, rather, that warn one  
not to smell them—

Like paper roses, a mirage of perfume.  
Since this garden ceased to enthrall me, 1475  
I have nested on the Paradisal tree.

Modern knowledge is the greatest  
blind—

Idol - worshipping, idol - selling, idol -  
making !

Shackled in the prison of phenomena,  
It has not overleaped the limits of the  
sensible.

130 SECRETS OF THE SELF xvi

It has fallen down in crossing the  
bridge of Life,

It has laid the knife to its own throat.

Having fire, it is yet cold as the tulip ;

Having flame, it is yet cold as hail.

Its nature remains untouched by the  
1485 glow of Love,

It is ever engaged in a joyless search.

Love is the Plato that heals the sick-  
nesses of the mind :<sup>1</sup>

The mind's melancholy is cured by its  
lancet.

The whole world bows in adoration to  
Love,

Love is the Mahmúd that conquers the  
1490 Somnath of intellect.<sup>2</sup>

Modern science lacks this old wine in  
its cup,

Its nights are not loud with passionate  
prayer.

<sup>1</sup> In the *Masnavi* Love is called "the physician of our pride and self-conceit, our Plato and our Galen."

<sup>2</sup> The famous idol of Somnath was destroyed by Sultan Mahmúd of Ghazna.

xvi SECRETS OF THE SELF 131

Thou hast misprized thine own cypress<sup>1</sup>  
And deemed tall the cypress of  
others.

Like the reed, thou hast emptied  
thyself of Self 1495

And given thine heart to the music of  
others.

O thou that begg'st morsels from  
another's table,

Wilt thou seek thine own kind in  
another's shop ?

The Moslem's feast is burned up by the  
lamps of strangers,

His mosque is consumed by the  
Christian monastery. 1500

When the deer fled from the sacred  
territory of Mecca,

The hunter's arrow pierced her side.<sup>1</sup>

The leaves of the rose are scattered,  
~ like its scent :

O thou that hast fled from thy Self,  
come back to it !

<sup>1</sup> The pilgrims are forbidden to kill game.



182 SECRETS OF THE SELF xvi

    O trustee of the wisdom of the  
1505 Koran,  
Find thy lost unity again !  
We, who keep the gate of the citadel  
    of Islam,  
Have become unbelievers by neglecting  
    the watchword of Islam.  
The ancient Saki's bowl is shattered,  
The wine-party of the Hijáz is broken  
1510 up.  
The Ka'ba is filled with our idols,  
Infidelity mocks at our Islam.  
Our Sheikh hath gambled Islam away  
    for love of idols  
And made a rosary of the *zunnár*.<sup>1</sup>  
Our spiritual directors owe their rank  
1515 to their white hairs  
And are the laughing-stock of children  
    in the street ;  
Their hearts bear no impress of the-  
    Faith  
But house the idols of sensuality.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 110, note.

**XVI SECRETS OF THE SELF 133**

Every long-haired fellow wears the  
garb of a dervish—

Alas for these traffickers in religion ! 1520

Day and night they are travelling about  
with disciples,

And ignoring their religious duties.

Their eyes are without light, like the  
narcissus,

Their breasts devoid of spiritual wealth.

Preachers and Sáfís, all worship worldli-  
ness alike ; 1525

The prestige of the pure religion is  
ruined.

Our preacher fixed his eyes on the  
pagoda

And the mufti of the Faith sold his  
decision.

After this, O friends, what are we to  
do ?

Our guide turns his face towards the  
wine-house. 1530

## XVII

*Time is a sword.*

GREEN be the pure grave of Sháfi'í,<sup>1</sup>  
Whose vine hath cheered a whole  
world !

His thought plucked a star from  
heaven :

He named Time "a cutting sword."

How shall I say what is the secret of  
1535 this sword ?

All its brilliance is derived from Life.

Its owner is exalted above hope and  
fear, .

His hand is whiter than the hand of  
Moses.

<sup>1</sup> Founder of one of the four great Mohammedan schools of law.

**xvii SECRETS OF THE SELF 135**

At one stroke thereof water gushes  
from the rock

And the sea becomes land from dearth  
of moisture. 1540

Moses held this sword in his hand,  
Therefore he wrought more than man  
may contrive.

He clove the Red Sea asunder  
And made its waters like dry earth.  
The arm of Ali, the conqueror of  
Khaibar, 1545

Drew its strength from this same sword.  
The revolution of the sky is visible,  
The change of day and night is perceived.  
Look, O thou enthralled by Yesterday  
and To-morrow,  
Behold another world in thine own  
heart ! 1550

Thou hast sown the seed of darkness  
in thy clay,

Thou hast imagined Time as a line :  
Thy thought measures length of Time  
With the measure of night and day.

## 136 SECRETS OF THE SELF

'Thou mak'st this line a girdle on thine  
1555 infidel waist ;  
Thou art an advertiser of falsehood,  
like idols.  
Thou wert the Elixir, and thou hast  
become a peck of dust ;  
Thou wert born the conscience of 'Truth,  
and thou hast become a lie !  
Art thou a Moslem ? Then cast off  
this girdle !  
Be a candle to the feast of the religion  
1560 of the free !  
Knowing not the origin of Time,  
Thou art ignorant of everlasting Life.  
How long wilt thou be a thrall of night  
and day ?  
Learn the mystery of 'Time from the  
words "I have a time with God."<sup>1</sup>  
Phenomena arise from the march of  
1565 Time,

<sup>1</sup> The Prophet said, "I have a time with God of such sort that neither angel nor prophet is my peer," meaning (if we interpret his words according to the sense of this passage) that he felt himself to be timeless.

**xvii SECRETS OF THE SELF 137**

Life is a part of the contents of Time's  
consciousness.

The cause of Time is not the revolution  
of the sun :

Time is everlasting, but the sun does  
not last for ever.

Time is joy and sorrow, festival and  
fast ;

Time is the secret of moonlight and  
sunlight.

1570

Thou hast extended Time, like Space,  
And distinguished Yesterday from To-  
morrow.

Thou hast fled, like a scent, from thine  
own garden ;

Thou hast made thy prison with thine  
own hand.

Our Time, which has neither beginning  
nor end,

1575

Blossoms from the flower-bed of our  
mind.

To know its root quickens the living  
with new life :

138 SECRETS OF THE SELF XVII

Its being is more splendid than the  
dawn.

Life is of Time, and Time is of Life :

“Do not abuse Time !” was the  
1580 command of the Prophet.

Oh, the memory of those days when  
Time's sword

Was allied with the strength of our  
hands !<sup>1</sup>

We sowed the seed of religion\*in men's  
hearts

And unveiled the face of Truth ;

Our nails tore loose the knot of this  
1585 world,

Our bowing in prayer gave blessings  
to the earth.

From the jar of Truth we made rosy  
wine gush forth,

We charged against the ancient taverns.\*

O thou in whose cup is old wine,

<sup>1</sup> The glorious days when Islam first set out to convert  
and conquer the world.

xvii SECRETS OF THE SELF 139

A wine so hot that the glass is well-  
nigh turned to water, 1590

Wilt thou in thy pride and arrogance  
and self-conceit

Taunt us with our emptiness?

Our cup, too, hath graced the sym-  
posium ;

Our breast hath owned a spirit.

A new age hath been endued with our  
beauty 1595

And hath risen from the dust of our  
feet.

Our blood hath watered God's harvest,  
All worshippers of God are our debtors.

The *takbîr* was our gift to the world,<sup>1</sup>

Ka'bas were built of our clay. 1600

By means of us God taught the Koran,  
From our hand He dispensed His  
bounty.

Although crown and signet have passed  
from us,

<sup>1</sup> The *takbîr* is the cry "*Allah akbar*," "Allah is most great."



140 SECRETS OF THE SELF xvii

\*Do not look with contempt on our  
beggarliness !

1605 In thine eyes we are good for nothing,  
Thinking old thoughts, despicable.  
We have honour from "There is no  
god but Allah,"

We are the preservers of the universe.  
Freed from the vexation of to-day and  
to-morrow,

We have pledged ourselves to love  
1610 One.

We are the conscience hidden in God's  
heart,

We are the heirs of Moses and Aaron.  
Sun and moon are still bright with our  
radiance,

Lightning-flashes still lurk in our cloud.  
Our essence is the mirror of the Divine  
1615 essence :

The Moslem's being is one of the signs  
of God.

## XVIII

### *An invocation.*

O THOU that art as the soul in the body  
of the universe,

Thou art our soul and thou art ever  
fleeing from us.

Thou breakest music into Life's lute ;  
Life envies Death when death is for  
thy sake.

1620

Once more bring comfort to our sad  
hearts,

Once more dwell in our breasts !

• Once more let us hear thy call to  
honour,

Strengthen our weak love.

We are oft complaining of destiny,

1625

142 SECRETS OF THE SELF XVIII

Thou art of great price and we have  
naught.

Hide not thy fair face from the empty-  
handed !

Sell cheap the love of Salmán and Bilál !<sup>1</sup>

Give us the sleepless eye and the  
passionate heart,

1630 Give us again the nature of quicksilver !  
Show unto us one of thy manifest signs,  
That the necks of our enemies may be  
bowed !

Make this chaff a mountain crested  
with fire,

Burn with our fire all that is not God !

When the people let the clue of Unity  
1635 go from their hands,

They fell into a hundred mazes.

We are dispersed like stars in the  
world ;

Though of the same family, we are  
strange to one another.

<sup>1</sup> Salmán was a Persian, Bilál an Abyssinian. Both had been slaves and were devoted henchmen of the Prophet.

**XVIII SECRETS OF THE SELF 143**

Bind again these scattered leaves,  
Revive the law of love ! 1640

Take us back to serve thee as of  
old,

Commit thy cause to them that love  
thee !

We are travellers : give us devotion as  
our goal !

Give us the strong faith of Abraham !  
Make us know the meaning of "There  
is no god," 1645

Make us acquainted with the mystery  
of "except Allah" !

I who burn like a candle for the sake  
of others

Teach myself to weep like the candle.  
O God ! a tear that is heart-enkindling,  
Passionful, wrung forth by pain, peace-  
consuming, 1650

• May I sow in the garden, and may it  
grow into a fire

That washes away the fire-brand from  
the tulip's robe !

144 SECRETS OF THE SELF XVIII

My heart is with yestereve, my eye is  
on to-morrow :

Amidst the company I am alone.

1655 "Every one fancies he is my friend,  
But my secret thoughts have not  
escaped from my heart."

Oh, where in the wide world is my  
comrade ?

I am the Bush of Sinai : where is my  
Moses ?

I am tyrannous, I have done many a  
wrong to myself,

1660 I have nourished a flame in my bosom,  
A flame that seized the furniture of  
judgement,

And cast fire on the skirt of discretion,  
And lessoned with madness the reason,  
And burned up the existence of  
knowledge :

1665 Its blaze enthrones the sun in the sky,  
And lightnings encircle it with adora-  
tion for ever.

Mine eye fell to weeping, like dew,

**xviii SECRETS OF THE SELF 145**

Since I was entrusted with that hidden  
fire.

I taught the candle to burn openly,  
While I myself burned unseen by the  
world's eye. 1670

At last flames breathed from every hair  
of me,

Fire dropped from the veins of my  
thought;

My nightingale picked up the spark-  
grains

And created a fire-tempered song.

Is the breast of this age without a  
heart? 1675

Majnún trembles lest Lailá's howdah  
be empty.

It is not easy for the candle to throb  
alone:

Ah, is there no moth worthy of me?

How long shall I wait for one to share  
my grief?

How long must I search for a con-  
fidant? 1680

146 SECRETS OF THE SELF XVIII

O Thou whose face lends light to the  
moon and the stars,

Withdraw thy fire from my soul !

Take back what Thou hast put in my  
breast,

Remove the stabbing radiance from  
my mirror,

1685 Or give me one old comrade

To be the mirror of mine all-burning love !

In the sea wave tosses side by side  
with wave :

Each hath a partner in its emotion.

In heaven star consorts with star,

And the bright moon lays her head on

1690 the knees of Night.

Morning touches Night's dark side,

And To-day throws itself against

To-morrow.

One river loses its being in another,

A waft of air dies in perfume.

There is dancing in every nook of the

1695 wine-house,

Madman dances with madman.

Howbeit in thine essence 'Thou art  
single,

'Thou hast decked out for 'Thyself a  
whole world.

I am as the tulip of the field,

In the midst of a company I am alone. 1700

I beg of 'Thy grace a sympathising friend,

An adept in the mysteries of my nature,

A friend endowed with madness and  
wisdom,

One that knoweth not the phantom of  
vain things,

That I may confide my lament to his  
soul

1705

And see again my face in his heart.

His image I will mould of mine own  
clay,

I will be to him both idol and worshipper.

•

THE END





